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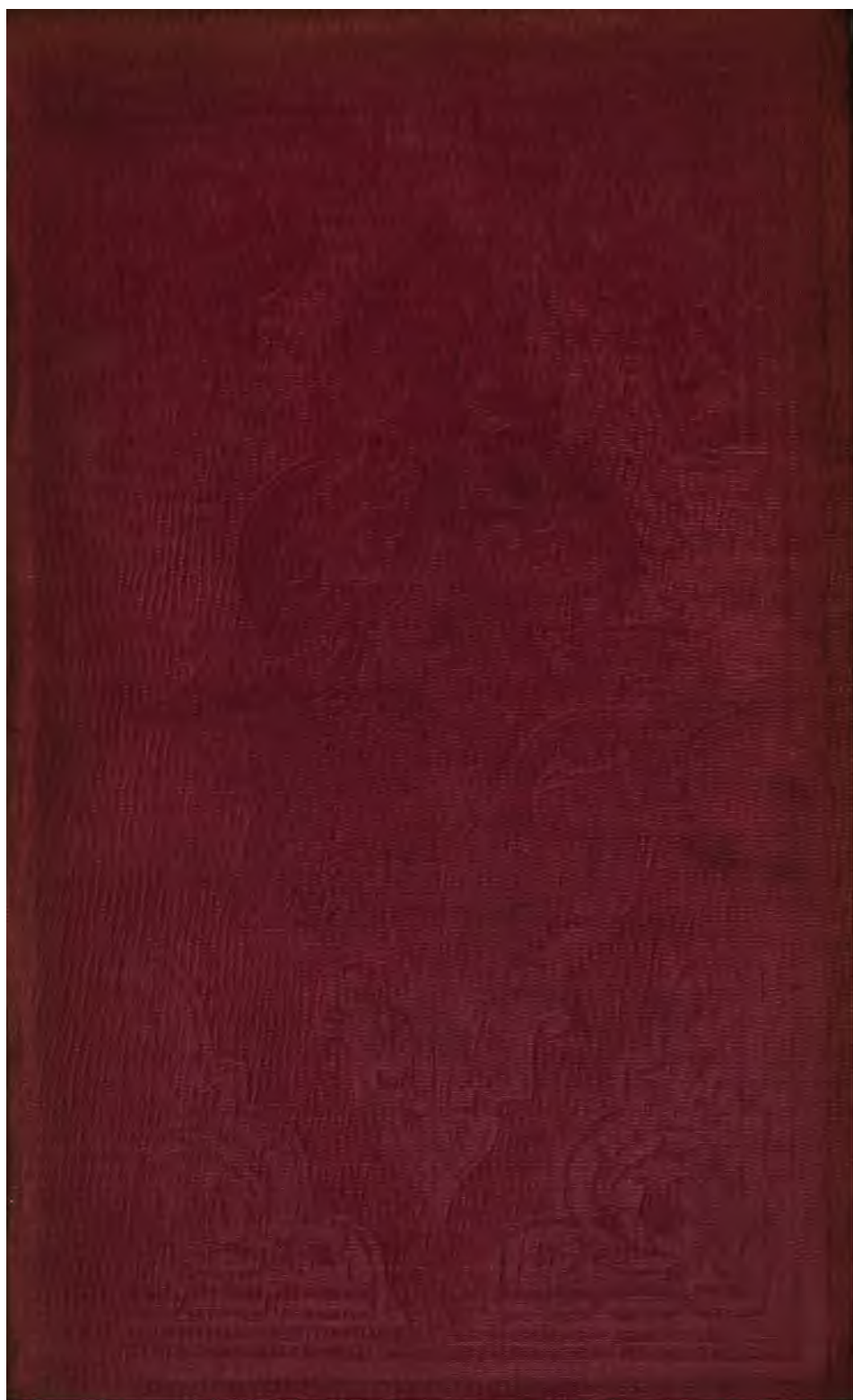
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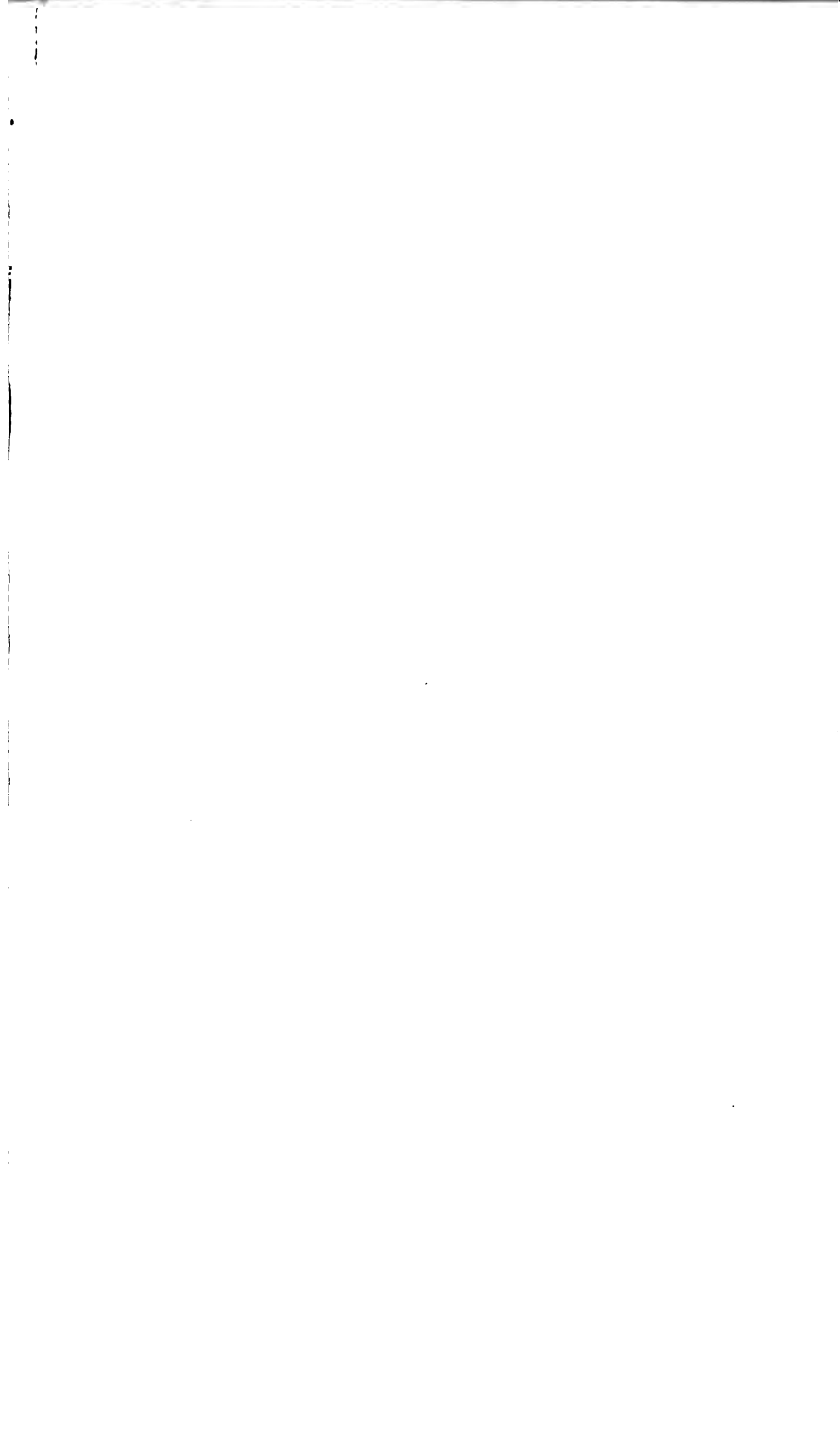
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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE BATTLE ON THE BOSPHORUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE BANQUET AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

You must accompany me this evening," said the Signor Alviano to Paoli, "to a very superb banquet given by the wealthiest Greek Merchant in Byzantium, in honour of his daughter's marriage. You have seen little, since your arrival, of the domestic manners and customs of the

object familiar to him, a short figure, closely enveloped in a mantle, with a deep hood, suddenly appeared at his side, touching his arm. Paoli looked round surprised, and was about to question the figure, as to his whereabouts, when it spoke, and the tones were those of a woman, and an old one.

"Signor," said she, "will you follow me to where good fortune awaits you?"

The words were spoken in *lingua-franco*.

Giacinto replied laughing—

"I will willingly follow you, my good dame; but the only good fortune I require, is to find my way to the Arsenal gate. Show me, or put me in the direct road, and here is a reward for your services." Offering some small coins.

"I can lead you, Signor, to the feet of the fairest woman in Byzantium," said the old crone, in a sharp voice. "Will you follow me?"

"No, dame," replied the Corsican, laughing; "the hour is late. Here, take these paras, and show me the way to the gate."

"And are you a man?" asked the figure, in a mocking tone, "to refuse the invitation of the beautiful Kousani, when she selects you for a lover. There are a hundred in Byzantium who would stake a thousand zechines for such an invitation."

"Kousani," replied Paoli, surprised, for he remembered that the young Greek Constantine had mentioned the name, and spoke of her extraordinary beauty. He said she was the only daughter of the wealthiest Jew in the Greek empire. "No, my worthy dame," replied the Corsican, impatiently, and moving onwards, "since you refuse to point out my way, I must even find it myself."

The old woman turned away muttering some kind of execration, in a language the Knight did not understand. But the next moment, a loud shriek caused him to turn round, when,

to his surprise, the old crone lay upon the ground, just beneath the shrine, and striding over her, stood the figure of a man striking at her with right good will.

Indignant at such gross usage to a female though none of the most amiable, the Corsican turned to chastise the fellow ; but he no sooner approached, than the man darted off with singular alacrity. The old crone groaned miserably, and vowed every bone in her miserable body was broken by her villanous husband, though she deserved it for her wickedness. At the same time she implored the Corsican, as a good christian, to help her upon her legs. This was easily done ; but she then uttered fresh cries of pain.

“ Only help me, Signor, as far as the end of this street. I have a relative lives there, and I will get you a guide to shew you the way to the place you want.”

The Corsican, good-naturedly, assisted the moaning creature to a lofty, and apparently

dilapidated mansion, at the door of which she sank down, groaning more than ever.

"Push open the door, stranger," said she, "for the love of the blessed Prophet—Virgin, I mean."

Scarcely heeding the words, and anxious to get rid of his very disagreeable charge, the Knight pushed open a very heavy door. All was still, and intensely dark within. Advancing a step or two, he shouted aloud, when suddenly the door, through which he entered, slammed to with a loud noise, while, at the same moment, the spot on which he stood gave way, and precipitated him, with stunning violence, into a vault beneath. Before he could even make an attempt to rise, the light of a torch flashed through the vault, and at once four powerful blacks threw themselves upon him, prostrate as he was, and dizzy with a violent blow on the head, received from falling. Paoli, even with his vast strength, could

offer but a fruitless resistance to four strong men, armed with long daggers.

After a fierce struggle, his arms were bound so strongly with cords as to cause acute pain. Not a word was spoken. Lifting him on his legs, the blacks motioned him to follow them. Though they uttered not a word, they placed their poniards close to his breast, and with violent gestures, threatened him with death if he refused to obey. The Corsican felt his blood boiling, and his temples throbbing with intense rage; he nevertheless moved after the blacks.

Quitting the vault, they ascended a long flight of stone steps—through a strong trap door they immersed into a long dismal passage. One of the blacks then opened a door of immense thick planks, while the other three pushed the Corsican within, and shutting the door, the enraged Knight heard the massive bolts shoot into their sockets. Thus he remained in utter darkness, bound with his

hands behind him in the most painful manner.

Groping with his feet, he ascertained that the chamber was of very small dimensions ; he stumbled over a bench—which was the sole furniture it contained. A bundle of straw occupied one corner, upon which he, after a vain and painful struggle to free his hands, threw himself, to ponder, over the strange and dangerous situation into which he had been entrapped. He could by no means clearly understand the motive of his seizure. That the vile old crone had ensnared him, he felt satisfied ; and, on recalling his recollection, he remembered having heard, that a daring and lawless gang of desperadoes infested the city, and, in the miserable state of the Empire, committed many outrages. So craftily planned were their operations, that, hitherto they had escaped detection.

If the gang that now detained him prisoner were partners of those desperadoes, no doubt

their object was ransom. During the Crusades, large sums had been extorted from several of the Crusaders, captured in that way. Sometimes, when no money could be obtained for their release, they were secretly got on board ship, carried to Gallipoli, or Adrianople, and sold as slaves.

This thought, for an instant, made the Corsican shudder ; but, with an effort, his high spirit shook off the feeling of despair that was creeping over him. He then thought of the anxiety of his beloved Agnes, when his most unaccountable disappearance should become known. He was, however, disturbed in his thoughts, by hearing the bolts drawn back and the door open ; when the same four blacks and the detestable old crone who had betrayed him entered. The woman was now without mantle or hood ; and, looking at her, he beheld one of the fiercest and most forbidding hags he had ever the misfortune to encounter.

“ So, dog of a giaour,” yelled the wretch

as she advanced towards him, holding a brass lamp in one hand, and a brazen pitcher in the other, "so, beauty had no charms for you. The lovely Kousani was rejected. Ha ! ha !" And her croaking voice, in laughing, sounded horribly in the ears of the Corsican who looked upon the old wretch with loathing.

One of the blacks carried a bundle of coarse garments, which the crone, who seemed to have the authority of a mistress, said, were to be put on instead of those he wore.

"Hear me, woman," exclaimed Paoli, conquering his disgust, "if your object is to extort money, there is no further need of ill-treatment. Name what sum you demand, and, if within my power, you shall have it. But detain me in this state twenty-four hours longer, if you tear my body in pieces, not one para shall you ever receive."

"You are a fool, Christian," interrupted the woman, in a mocking tone. "Half the amount

of your capture is paid ; and when we deliver up your carcase, be it dead or alive, to him that has paid for it, we get the remainder. So strip. Your body will be bound by a strong chain to the wall to keep you out of mischief. He told us to take care of your claws, as you were a rough one to handle. Ha ! ha ! ha ! It's droll though, how an old hag mastered you, strong as you are."

Completely astounded, Paoli stood looking from the old wretch to the four statue-like figures of the blacks.

"This then," thought he, "is the premeditated act of an enemy. But who?"

Not for one instant did the thought of Pisani, as the perpetrator of the outrage, enter his mind.

While he stood bewildered in fruitless conjecture, a footstep sounded in the passage ; and, the moment after, a tall, strong man, habited in the garb of a Greek sailor, entered,

carrying a massive chain, fastened to an iron clasp, intended for the waist. This man was neither a Moor nor a Turk : his features were good, but swarthy, and somewhat fierce in expression. Thick black brows, and beard added to the sternness of his look. He cast a glance upon Paoli, and then, in a language unknown to him, spoke to the old woman.

After a few words had passed between them, he turned to the Corsican, speaking in pure Italian.

"Your hands shall be unbound provided you give your word—your Knightly word—such I believe is the custom with you Knights—to quietly take off your upper garments and put on these," pointing to some at his feet. "If you refuse, your legs shall be bound, yourself gagged, and the clothes cut from your back."

Had his hands been free, Paoli would not

cruel situation he had fallen into. "Do your worst. I pass no Knightly word to such a villain."

A laugh of scorn was the answer of the man, as he made a sign; when the four blacks instantly seized upon the Corsican, who, with a blow of his foot, sent the foremost negro reeling to the further end of the chamber. Then, with a prodigious force, he burst the cords round his wrists. But, as he did so, the five men threw themselves upon him, (exhausted with the effort,) and bore him to the ground, amid curses and execrations from all, while the old fiend yelled—

"Give him the knife—give him the knife—his dead carcase is worth as much as it is with life in it."

Held to the ground by five powerful men—for the four blacks were, in bone and muscle, nearly as strong as himself—Paoli was almost suffocated. His garments were torn from his

back ; and the coarse costume of a Scutari boatman was substituted in their place. The massive iron clasp was then fastened round his waist, and finally fixed, with two immense padlocks, to a huge eye-bolt in the wall. This being done, the man who spoke Italian spurned him with his foot.

The insult was dearly purchased ; for before he could withdraw himself from the range of the Corsican's arm, a blow that would have felled an ox, planted between the eyes, laid the aggressor bleeding and senseless at the feet of the astounded blacks. A mad howl burst from the lips of the old crone, as she snatched up a knife belonging to one of the negroes, and darted upon Paoli, shrieking with frantic rage.

" You have killed our Chief ! Curses on your hand ! "

And, blind with rage, she struck with the knife at his face. Vicious and detestable as

was the old wretch, the Knight merely caught her hand in a grasp that rendered all her members powerless but her tongue. Her wild cries brought another actor on the scene. A tall, well-looking female, evidently a Greek in features and dress, hastily entered the room, and cast a rapid glance upon all within. Her hair and eyes were jet black. The moment she beheld the still senseless figure of the man whom Paoli had struck, she started back with a cry of rage. But kneeling down by his side, and wiping the blood from his face, and also perceiving he was regaining his senses, she said something to the blacks, who, raising the man in their arms, carried him from the chamber.

Turning to the Corsican, she addressed him in good Italian, saying—

“Release the woman, and you will be no farther molested this night; and you,” taking the old hag by the arm, “come with me.

Had you tried gentler means, all this might have been avoided, and our captive equally secure."

Suprised at the gentle tone and moderate behaviour of this woman, whom Paoli, in his own mind, had set down as the wife of the man just carried from the room, he addressed her, imploring her to listen to his offers of liberal reward. In fact, he offered a sum that, but for some mysterious reason, must have satisfied the cupidity of any desperadoes, however greedy of gain!

The woman turned her dark, piercing eyes upon the Knight for a moment without replying. At length she said—

"No sum from you could purchase your freedom. We are sworn; and, strange as you may think it, from our conduct to you, we should never dream of breaking that oath. Dead or alive, you go to him that has bought you."

Taking the old and scowling hag by the arm, and lifting the lamp from the floor, she and her accomplices left the chamber, firmly bolting and barring the ponderous door after them.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONFEDERATES.

THAT branch of the Sea of Marmora which forms the port of Byzantium, and divides the Genoese settlement of Pera and Galata from the City, runs, for six miles, in a serpentine figure, and is distinguished by the name of the Golden Horn ; on the Genoese side of which the fortifications were of amazing strength ; several castles and fortresses, almost impregnable in that age, when gunpowder was scarcely known, reared their walls and

lofty towers, frowning defiance upon the city opposite.

The Emperor Cantacuzenus, who then sat upon the Greek throne, beheld those imposing erections of the Genoese with alarm ; for so contemptible had become the power of the Greeks, that the handful of Genoese forming the garrisons of the Castles of Pera and Galata, cared little how they insulted the inhabitants of the city.

We must now beg our readers to accompany us, on the second night after the capture of Giacinto, Paoli into a chamber of the strong fortress of Galata. This tower was under the command of a Genoese Captain, with a force of sixty or seventy men. The tower was built close to the waters of the Golden Horn, and directly facing the point on which now stands the Seraglio. The chamber above-mentioned was a large, circular one. Hung round its walls were arms and armour of various sorts. It was then the

month of December, and a cold and bitter gale was blowing from the North-East. Seated before a blazing wood-fire sat two individuals, both in the prime of life, but otherwise very different in form and feature. The first to be described is the Commander of the Tower of Galata, Andrea Campaldino.

His father, Mastino Campaldino, was a Genoese of low birth ; but, living in adventurous and perilous times, and being gifted with a strong frame, great courage, and skill, he fought his way upwards with steady perseverance ; and at the commencement of this tale, commanded the forces of Genoa in her invasion of Corsica. His son, Andrea, held a command under his father, and exceeded his sire in the ferocious acts of cruelty perpetrated upon the unhappy islanders. As already related, Mastino Campaldino fell by the hand of Paoli ; and Andrea, in defending his sire, received from the same sword a wound, the conse-

quences of which embittered his after-life, and exasperated him ten-fold against the slayer of his father.

Andrea Campaldino was vain to excess of a very fine person and exceedingly handsome features, which were irrevocably spoiled by the sword of Paoli; for the blow not only left a deep and unsightly scar across the left temple and cheek, but the sight of the left eye was lost for ever.

Burning with an eager desire of vengeance against Paoli, not only did he offer a large sum for his capture, but numerous assassins, brought over from Genoa by his father, were let loose on his track. Paoli, however, baffled all the attempts upon his life, and escaped to the Continent, while Andrea, still suffering from the effects of his wound, threw up his command, and returned to Genoa; and as soon as his health was restored, joined a body of adventurers in an expedition against the island of Capraja, which was repulsed. Some time

after, he sailed with a Genoese fleet for the shores of the Bosphorus; and there he obtained the command of the Tower of Galata.

When the war broke out between Venice and Genoa, Campaldino employed a fast-sailing zebec in cruising along the shores of the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmora; and her Commander, not being very particular as to the vessels he attacked, provided he considered the capture certain, amassed a considerable store of plunder.

Returning from a cruise in the Propontis, the captain of his zebec beheld the contest between our hero's galley and the Genoese vessel commanded by the Count Durazzo, and and shortly after learned that the Venetian galley was commanded by a Corsican of the name of Paoli. This man knew nothing whatever of Paoli or his country; he had made the inquiries because he wished to shun any future encounter with The Lion, for he had very narrowly escaped being seen by her, while

plundering an Italian bark, whose flag was under the protection of Venice.

On returned to Galata, he mentioned the escape he had had to Andrea Campaldino, stating how dangerous it was to attempt any further depredations in the Sea of Marmora, while so fine a galley as that commanded by Paoli was cruising in those seas.

“Commanded by whom?” exclaimed Campaldino, with a start of astonishment. “What name did you say?”

“Paoli, a Corsican, I understand, in the service of Venice.”

Campaldino was amazed. Could it be the same? All the evil passions of his nature were roused with ten-fold violence. The captain of his zebec was an Italian by birth. Various crimes of no light nature forced him to fly his country, and having been taken by a Tunisian rover, he had spent six years chained to the oar. At length, carried to Adrianople, he there became a Mahometan, and would have

prospered by that act of infamy, but, having murdered a Turk in a frenzy of passion, he fled, and, after a variety of adventures, reached Byzantium, where he very soon became connected with one of the most daring gang of desperadoes and kidnappers that ever infested that city.

When the great pestilence swept over Europe, Byzantium suffered to an enormous amount. Three parts of her population were carried off in one particular part of the city, and for years after, the houses were left to fall into ruin and decay. Many fell, and others were without roofs. The place was termed the plague-ground, and shunned universally, for it bore an evil name besides.

Amid these deserted habitations, the above-mentioned gang—composed of outcasts and villains of all nations—had several hiding-places, either for concealing their victims, or stowing their plunder. The leader of this gang was killed in a night-encounter; and Paulo

Montoni, the name of Campaldino's Captain, married his widow, and shortly after was elected their leader.

In making a voyage to Adrianople, with a number of unfortunate captives, kidnapped at various times, their bark, being suspected of piracy, was chased by a Genoese galley. To be taken with a hold full of chained Christians, would be certain destruction. It was blowing hard, and the sea rough. Paulo Montoni and his crew scuttled the bark, and thought to escape in the boat. The ill-starred captives sank with the vessel before their pursuers could reach her; but Montoni and his comrades found their boat would not live to reach the shore in the violent gale, which kept each instant increasing; and had not the galley picked them up, they must have perished.

Though not aware of the nature of their cargo, the Genoese Commander, nevertheless, thought they were pirates of some sort or

other ; and, with very little examination, condemned them to the labour of the oar. On board this galley was Andrea Campaldino, who examined the men saved ; and, struck with the daring and reckless manner of Paulo, he felt satisfied, in his own mind, that he was a man who would suit him in some views he had. When he obtained the command of the Tower of Galata, he recollected this man, made enquiries, and found he was working upon the ramparts of Pera. Having sought him out, he had a conversation with him, and promised to procure him his liberty if he would take a solemn oath to serve him in whatever he required.

Paulo Montoni accordingly, swore the most fearful oaths, that if he could liberate him, he would sacrifice life in his service, and that he might keep him near him without fear, as he had the power of so disguising his person as to defy detection.

“No occasion for that,” observed Cam-

dino, "you shall be at liberty to-morrow—I will purchase your freedom from your master, who is under certain obligations to me."

He kept his word; and Paulo Montoni entered the service of Campaldino, who made him Captain of a zebec he had fitted out at his own expense. Montoni soon understood his master; and very shortly after, informed him he was the leader of a gang of desperadoes who actually lived with impunity within the walls of Byzantium. The confederates then made a mutual compact. Campaldino intended, when he should have amassed sufficient plunder, to throw up his command and return to Genoa.

Paulo, besides cruising now and then, entered Byzantium, and to the astonishment of his wife, who was on the very point of marrying the new leader appointed—for Montoni and his comrades were considered to have perished—

made his appearance amid the very party assembled to celebrate the wedding of their elected chief, (a worthy Moor) who, however, gave up the lady; and Montoni, not to be outdone in politeness, resigned the command; saying, it was all for the better, as he required to be absent at times for a considerable period.

Campaldino set Montoni to make inquiries concerning Paoli in Byzantium, and he very soon learned that the Paoli who commanded the Venetian galley—was the identical Paoli who had deprived him (Compaldino) of the sight of his left eye.

“Montoni,” said the Genoese, “you must entrap that Corsican on his return to Byzantium. Bring him hither alive, if possible.”

“I will engage to entrap him,” returned Montoni, “and keep him secure enough in a vault from which it is impossible he should

escape. But to bring him here now that the harbour is so strictly guarded will be difficult. It is however, to be done—”

“Shave his head, and dye his skin,” suggested Campaldino, with a grin of malice. “Put on him the garment of a galley slave; and disguising yourself and a few more, pass him off as a runaway from the galleys in Scutari. Mark me: he is one of the most powerful men you have ever encountered. He is, however daring to recklessness. Gag him by all means.”

“Your plan is a good one,” replied Montoni. “As to his strength, have no fear. We have four blacks, each a Hercules.”

After some further conversation, Montoni crossed over to Scutari. Thence, in disguise of a Greek Mariner, he entered Byzantium; and after waiting for the return of Paoli, laid his plans to entrap him. They all failed till the night of the banquet at the Greek mer-

chant's, when Paoli so unfortunately fell into his power.

After this digression, which was unavoidable, we return to the circular chamber in the tower of Galata.

CHAPTER III.

ANDREA CAMPALDINO.

THE two individuals, seated before a blazing fire in the tower of Galata, were Andrea Campaldino and his lieutenant, Achilles Furiani. The commander of Galata was at this period about eight-and-twenty. He was of the middle height and somewhat slender, yet muscular and well made. To look on one side of his face only, the beholder would pronounce the Genoese to be a very handsome man; but viewing him full in the face, the livid scar

across the temple and cheek, and the extinction of the left eye, gave him a most forbidding and sinister expression of countenance.

In contrast to his commander, his lieutenant Achilles was a man of big bones, and powerful muscles, of immense bulk and stature, but without a particle of grace or activity in his air or manner. Yet his features bore a general expression of careless good nature. In fact, Achilles cared but for three things in the world, namely, good eating, considerable drinking, and a little fighting. Perhaps the latter was taken for exercise, or to help digestion. Furiani was in all his patron's secrets; for he was a complete adventurer. Being too lazy to do anything for himself, he was quite willing to act in any manner which Andrea might desire, whether for good or evil. Had his master been a good man, Achilles would have followed his example, provided he had been sufficiently supplied with food and drink. But Campaldino was a villain; and, conse-

quently, Furiani was in the right way of becoming one also.

The two worthies sat at each side of the fire. A table, covered with substantial edibles, and numerous flasks graced the apartment.

"It blows hard, Achilles," said Campaldino, stretching his legs towards the cheerful blaze.

"Very," replied the lieutenant, filling a huge goblet with some of the famous wine of Cyprus. "How very comfortable the old tower is in this cursed biting wind," he added, after getting to the bottom of a goblet that would have satisfied any moderate man for the evening.

"Yes," returned Campaldino, looking at the empty goblet, "and how deuced fortunate it was that Montoni transferred those hogsheads of Cyprus wine, intended for the use of the Greek Admiral, into our keeping; or, *per Bacco*! that capacious stomach of thine would

ere this have caused a drought in the Tower of Galata."

"A most useful rascal is that Paulo," observed Achilles, "if he does not play you false some of these days."

"I have no fear in the world of him," returned Campaldino, selecting a flask or two of the Cyprus for himself; for Furiani required to replenish his goblet after every sentence; "he is late to-night; he promised faithfully to be here two hours ago. I somehow begin to fear that Corsican will slip through his fingers with all his acuteness."

"I only wish I had my hand on him," said the lieutenant, holding out a hand, that for vastness of palm and immense length of fingers, was scarcely to be surpassed even by a giant.

Campaldino smiled grimly, and curled his lip, as his eye rested upon the inactive mass before him.

"If you had, my worthy friend," returned

the Commander of Galata, "you would wish it off again; for, upon my soul, he would think as little of your fat carcase, as you do of that empty flask you have just drained."

"The devil he would!" retorted Achilles, in no way offended; "is he a giant? or is he a magician? or does he deal in the evil eye, like those cursed Greeks? for, *per Bacco*! I do not count myself a chicken."

"No, not in eating and drinking, my worthy Achilles; nor indeed in the matter of fighting either. Still, I tell you, that cursed Corsican would drill a hole through your capacious stomach that would effectually prevent your swilling Cyprus as you do; and in less time than you empty a flask. He is neither a magician nor an evil eye, nor, as far as weight goes, as heavy a carcase as you. He stands nearly as high; but his strength is surprising, his activity great, and, from what I myself have witnessed—"

"And felt, too," interrupted Furiani.

"You are right, curse him !" fiercely continued Campaldino, passing his hand across his brow. "And he shall yet feel me. But rouse yourself, Achilles. Go as far as the water-gate ; see if the light is in the right place. There is no trusting that thick-headed knave on guard to-night. Montoni is late ; but if the light is kept clear and distinct, he will cross to-night, notwithstanding this strong wind."

"Well, I would rather he should—"

"Hark !" interrupted Campaldino. "Some one ascends the stairs."

The next moment the door opened, and Paulo Montoni entered the chamber. The Commander and his lieutenant started, and stared with astonishment at the Italian, who advanced into the room, and, filling a goblet, for, it appears, there was no kind of ceremony amongst the confederates, said—

"By the mass, Captain, but this stuff is far better lining for a man's inside, than that con-

founded east wind which howls without like a famished wolf."

"You are not far wrong, Paulo, my fine fellow," remarked Achilles; "but who the devil has broken the bridge of your nose, and turned that grey eye of yours into as pretty a specimen of a black one as you would meet in a day's ride?"

"The same hand, by the mass," returned Montoni, with a careless laugh, "as spoiled our Commander's beauty."

"Have you then bungled the job, after all?" bitterly demanded Campaldino; "and got a broken nose, and the side of your face mangled as a token of remembrance? I told you to take care, and warned you that he hits hard."

"*Corpo di Bacco!*" laughed Achilles, as he filled his own goblet and the Italian's. "It's droll; that d——d Corsican seems to have a fancy for blinding a man. How did it happen, eh?"

"Well, if you will just give a man time to get this east wind out of his stomach," and he drew his chair near to the fire, while Campaldino gazed sulkily into the glowing embers, "I will tell you all about it. A broken nose, and a damaged optic, I certainly have got; but as I never was remarkable for beauty, it matters little; especially as I have a wife, who's not particular as to looks, seeing she was going to marry a black when she thought I had slipped my cable. Come, Captain, rouse; don't look cast down. I charge nothing for the broken nose; for, by the Pope's head, I have got the game safe and sound."

"Ha! the devil you have!" exclaimed Campaldino, springing on his feet. "Why, the devil, did you not out with it at once, and not be banding jokes with that eternal wine-swiller there."

"Fore Gad, you neither of you gave me

time," returned the Italian. "And, besides, there is nothing lost by the delay."

"You are sure you have him safe? No chance of escape, eh?" demanded Andrea.

"Not unless he walks away with two hundred weight of iron, and eat the four blacks that are watching him like hyenas; to say nothing of some half dozen of the crew of the zebec, who could lend a helping hand, if wanting."

"Well, by St. Antonio, you have managed it admirably," exclaimed Andrea, tossing off a full goblet, and then drawing his breath as if relieved from some heavy oppression. "But how did you manage? You scarcely ventured to use force in the streets of Byzantium?"

"No," returned Montoni; "that would have been madness with such a man as this Corsican. Besides, we had no chance. Since his return, his only walk was from the Arsenal to the mansion of one of the wealthiest Venetian

merchants in Byzantium, named Alviano. By-the-by, that puts me in mind of a plot that was hatching amid the gang at the very period of my arrival. I mean the time when I caught my wife on the point of marrying their present black leader. This plot was to set fire to the mansion of that very merchant. His stores are beneath the house, and are full of immensely rich goods, which he is on the point of shipping for Venice. But, *Corpo di Bacco*, somehow I couldn't stomach that. There's a lovely girl there—the merchant's daughter, and several females; and to run the risk of burning them—for the sake of plunder, was rather too bad."

"Curse them!" muttered Achilles, actually stopping in the middle of his draught, "they must be a precious set of hell-hounds, these comrades of thine, eh, Montoni?"

"I am rejoiced, Paulo," said the Commander of Galata, and he fixed his one eye in a

very expressive glance upon the undimmed optic of the Italian, "to see you study as well as practice humanity. I wonder how the devil you brought yourself to scuttle your craft, when we gave you chase; and thus send forty or fifty unshrived christians into the other world."

"Ah, my worthy Commander, that was an act of grace as well as self-preservation. You see they would have been sold as slaves, a much worse fate, if you had not singled us out. Then, if you had taken us, and found these unfortunates aboard, you would have hanged us without mercy. Besides, there were no females in the case. My heart is remarkably soft when there's a petticoat in the wind. But, somehow, to-night, you are both in the humor for digressions. I shall never get to say all I have to say, and be in time to cross before day-light."

"Well, Paulo, make sail then," said Achilles.

"The night is wearing out ; and so, by the Immortal Gods, is this Cyprus wine. You are a thirsty dog, Montoni."

The Italian laughed and continued his narration :—

"I said this Corsican only went from the Arsenal to the Merchant's house. By St. Antony, I don't wonder at his sticking to that beat ; for the girl is worth twenty-thousand piastres. Well, I began to despair. In the dress of a Greek sailor, I can walk the streets of the city with impunity. I often passed the Knight, and, by the mass, a finer looking fellow no man ever saw. At night he returned to the Arsenal ; but to attack such a man with his sword by his side, and a stout, able-bodied squire walking after him in the most frequented streets of the whole city, would be madness. I showed him one day to our decoy-duck—an old fiend in the shape of a woman, the mother of my wife. I beg your pardon, Signor

Furiani, just share that flask—I see it's the last."

Confound you! Go on man," pettishly exclaimed Campaldino. "You have both drunk enough to muddle a dozen."

"Keep your temper, noble *capitani*, fortune smiles on you, as it did on me. This Paoli attended a feast; and, as luck would have it, he left the banquet alone. Our decoy and two of the gang were lurking near. They saw him entangle himself in the streets, and quickly concerted a plan to get him to enter a house they have on the place, called the plague-ground, which is fitted up with a trap door at the entrance. The old woman tried to get him to follow her to a rendezvous with the beautiful Jewess, Kousani, with the intention of persuading him that she was in love with him. But our friend, not being amorously inclined—or else too much in love with the Merchant's daughter—only laughed at her. But, by the mass, the old woman was too much

for him. She pretended her husband was beating her. The Corsican helped her up. She implored him to assist her to the house of a friend. He did so, and entered the door to call this friend, when down he went through the trap, striking his head against the side, or, by St. Antonio, there would have been a broken skull among my black tigers. As it is, he has lamed one of them for a month with a kick. I was so enraged, that I gave him a push with my foot; and, *Corpo di Bacco*, he felled me to the earth with a blow between the eyes, depriving me of my senses for an hour or so, and effectually spoiling the beauty of my nose, as you very justly observe. But the question now is, how am I to get him across the harbour? His disappearance has caused the utmost consternation. An order has been issued by command of the Emperor, for the most diligent search to be made through every house suspected; a body of the Venetian sailors are nightly guard-

ing the gates ; nothing passes without inspection ; and large sums are offered by the Venetian merchant, Alviano, for any kind of information respecting the disappearance of the Corsican. Twice we had to fear an inspection of our hiding places ; but even had the searchers entered, my spies would have given us sufficient time to place our prisoner in the secret vaults."

"And why the devil," exclaimed Campaldino, "did you not place him there at first, and keep him there ? Why run any risk whatever ? Surely you do not fear his health ?" he added, with a mocking laugh.

"Well, by the mass, Captain, you are hard. Why four-and-twenty hours down in those vaults, this season of the year, would kill a dog. The waters are now up, and the whole of the secret vaults are at this moment two feet deep in water. The passages out into the waters of the port are completely blocked ; one or two of them would do on a pinch, that is,

we might hide in them during search ; but the devil himself wouldn't be able to pass a couple of days there."

"What, then, do you propose to do?" demanded Campaldino. "I know nothing of the localities, and can devise no plan."

"Why, you see, Captain," replied the Italian, "he is an extremely ugly customer to have the care of. He is utterly reckless of life; and I feel satisfied, if only one moment at liberty, would attack us all, and brain some of us before we could either secure or cut him down. Now, my plan is this:—one of our gang is a Greek who keeps a kind of shop in the bazar; he is our chief spy, and his shop only a sham. Now this fellow is from Scutari, and a huge big brute he is. He must die."

"Eh?—what the devil!" exclaimed Achilles, opening his eyes, which were beginning to close from repeated application to the Cyprus wine. "You don't mean to say you will murder your own comrade in order to ——"

"Tut, tut, Signor Achilles," interrupted the Italian, laughing boisterously, "what a chicken heart you have in that huge carcase of yours; but rest contented. We do not murder our comrades. This Greek must only get sick; and we shall give it out he is dead, and, of course, his friends will bury him in his native place, Scutari. A dose of opium will render our friend the Corsican a quiescent subject for a few hours. We will then inclose him in a coffin, procure a pass, and embark the body for Scutari. A well-manned galley from your side can meet us half-way. The rest I need not detain you in relating. It's very late. What think you of my plan?—for I must be off. All I can tell you is, that it will be impossible to keep him in Byzantium a week longer; for that d——d squire of his is more to be dreaded than the Greek Emperor or his entire guards."

"There is risk, and great risk too," said Campaldino, after a pause. Then, rising, he

took the Italian by the arm, and led him from the chamber unnoticed by Achilles, who gave audible tokens that the Cyprus wine had left him in a happy state of forgetfulness.

Campaldino, as he parted with Montini, said, speaking low and distinctly,

"You have sworn to obey me—no matter what I required of you. Now heed me. Should the slightest chance occur to enable your prisoner to escape, slay him. You understand me."

"Perfectly, *Capitano*, perfectly ; and it shall be done."

"And more," resumed the commander "Let him know, at the time, that Andrea Campaldino, son of that Mastino Campaldino, whom he slew, is the striker."

"*Benissimo*," said the Italian. That is, I suppose, to console him on his passage to eternity."

Campaldino returned to his chamber, while

the Italian pursued his way, muttering to himself—

“I’ll do it. It’s a much easier plan. My worthy Captain will be quite satisfied; and thus a few inches of cold steel will save a world of trouble. St. Antonio! it will be an act of grace. In the power of my worthy commander, the rest of his days would be passed in a dungeon, or the executioner’s axe would shorten him by a head. *Benissimo!*”

CHAPTER IV.

THE ESCAPE.

PAOLI was no sooner left to his own bitter reflections, than he threw himself on the ground almost in despair. As he did so, with his usual impetuosity, and without paying attention to the length of his chain, he gave a violent jerk to the fetters; and, to his astonishment, the huge eye-bolt in the wall, into which his chain was padlocked, came out, and fell to the ground. Springing to his feet, with thanksgiving to Providence, he took up the

bolt, and as a faint light—for it was then day—entered the chamber through a strong grating on the top of the wall, he examined the bolt. It was about three feet in length, and passed through an iron socket into the next chamber. In the end of the bolt was a hole for a stout pin to pass through, so as to prevent the bolt from being drawn out. This pin must either not have been inserted, or else it had dropped out by accident.

“Perhaps,” thought Paoli, “they have forgotten to examine whether the pin was properly placed. If so, and if they remember their neglect, they will be here in a body, and see what has happened.”

On looking at the bolt, it at once struck him that by inserting its smaller end into the staple that joined the iron clasp round his body, he could snap it, and thus free himself altogether of the ponderous chain.

With a powerful wrench, that caused him intense pain, he snapped the link. It next

occurred to him to replace, immediately, the bolt in the socket, which he did ; and then re-adjusting the iron round his waist, and tying it so as to keep it up with a strip of his torn garment, he threw himself on the straw, tired and exhausted, to ponder how he was next to proceed.

He had not reposed for more than a few moments, when he distinctly heard on the other side of the wall the blow as of a heavy hammer upon iron.

"They are driving a pin into the bolt," thought the Corsican.

The sounds ceased, and, after some moments of delay, he arose, and tried the bolt : it was firm as a rock.

"They had forgotten to examine the pin, that is evident," thought our hero ; "I will take it as a good omen," he mentally ejaculated ; "and with the aid and blessing of Providence, I shall effect my escape from this nest of villains."

All was quiet throughout the mansion. Paoli felt thirsty; and as the pitcher containing water was within his reach, he drank and was refreshed. While doing so, a thought struck him. The vessel was of brass or copper, and extremely heavy.

"Not a bad weapon," thought our hero, as he poised it in his hand. "A blow of this would surely brain one of those infernal negroes; and if I can possess myself of his short sword, I think I should be a match for the rest."

As yet, Paoli had not touched the vessel placed beside the pitcher, containing, he was aware, some kind of food. But as the faint light of day receded, and a deep gloom pervaded his miserable chamber, he felt nature required sustenance, notwithstanding the agony of his thoughts. The food was certainly not inviting; but, Paoli, accustomed during his early life to hard and scanty fare, when forced

to seek shelter in the mountains of his native land, ate sparingly of what was before him, and, shortly afterwards, fell into a deep slumber.

Thus passed the first night after his capture. The following day, and several hours of the night, also wore away, and he began to feel the fever of impatience stealing over him, when the sounds of bolts drawn back aroused his attention. Standing close by the pitcher, with one hand resting on the place where he had slightly fastened the iron ring round his body, so as to hide the broken staple, and with a quick beating, but resolute heart, he determined to dare his fate.

The door swung back, and the detestable old crone, followed by two of the blacks, with naked cutlasses or short swords in their hands, entered. The old woman "grinned horribly a ghastly smile," as she desired one of the blacks to put the water he carried into the pitcher,

while she poured the contents of a large bowl into the pan that held the Corsican's food, saying—

“You can eat, I see. Ha! ha! It's pleasant to think this is the last meal we shall have to provide for you.”

As the black advanced, Paoli stooped and raised the pitcher to his lips. Refreshed by the draught, for his mouth was parched by intense anxiety, he suddenly swung the ponderous vessel with terrible force, at the head of the negro, who, without a groan, fell senseless to the ground. His comrade, with a frantic yell, aimed his cutlass at Paoli's head; but the Corsican was prepared. Dropping the ponderous chain, he sprang upon the body of the prostrate black, seizing his cutlass. The aim of the other negro, nevertheless, found its victim. The wretched old woman had darted forward to seize the garments of the prisoner on seeing him spring forward. The blow, therefore, fell without

his having power to check it, right on the skull of the old crone. With a shriek that rang through the silent mansion, she dropped pierced to the brain beside the prostrate negro. Before another moment had elapsed, Paoli had struck the remaining black helpless to the ground; then, snatching up the light, he rushed from the chamber.

A long passage was without; at one end of which was a flight of stairs. Paoli took the turn to the left. As he did so, he heard the sound of a man's voice shouting from above; and instantly after, other voices. Then came the tramp of heavy feet descending the stairs. Rushing along the passage, he arrived at a door fastened by bolts on his side. Pulling these back, and dashing open the door, he beheld a flight of many stone steps. He was now seen by half a dozen men descending the stairs, he first noticed on leaving his prison. On beholding him, they raised a shout of rage and a volley of imprecations. The Corsican

rushed at a bound down the flight of steps, and along a narrow passage.

The sounds of his pursuers came nearer and nearer. Another door now barred his passage : it was bolted and fast locked. Mad with excitement, the Knight threw himself with all his power against this, as he hoped, only barrier to liberty. Shouts of exultation reached his ear ; his pursuers were in the same long passage, when the door gave way with a crash, and Poali fell forward, somewhat stunned with the shock. The bright vault of heaven was now above him ; but alas ! he had only burst his way into a very small court-yard surrounded by a wall, upwards of fifteen feet high.

"Now to God, and my weapon, I trust my life," ejaculated the Knight, as he turned to meet his enemies ; when his eyes fell upon a tall ladder resting against the house.

With a fervent prayer to Heaven, he seized the ladder, placed it against the outer wall,

and rapidly ascended. As he gained the top, his pursuers rushed with shouts and curses into the court ; but Paoli, with a force of which many strong men would have been incapable, raised the ladder, before the persons below could seize it ; and in the peril of the moment, he let it fall on the other side. A burst of imprecations issued from the two blacks and four men, in the garb of common sailors, who filled the court below ; but Paoli did not hesitate a moment. He saw there was a wide ditch below the wall ; and into it he dropped, heedless of its contents or depth ; for he conjectured his enemies would seek the nearest ground to pursue him.

Extricating himself from a mass of stagnant and filthy water, the fugitive hastened across a heap of ruins, and thence into a kind of square of ruined and deserted houses. The night was far advanced ; and though fine, was dark. He had not the most remote idea where he was ; but hastened on, expecting, each mo-

ment, to enter some habitable part of the city. He was then crossing the spot, called the "Plague-ground." After innumerable stumbles over ruined walls, and half-filled ditches, he found himself, as well as he could judge by the appearance of the houses in the darkness of the night, among dwellings tenanted by the poorer class of Greeks.

While he paused to regain breath, and return thanks to Heaven for his most fortunate escape from his unknown enemies, a glowing light suddenly illumined the sky above his head, increasing every moment in brightness. Paoli soon became convinced that a fierce fire raged in a distant part of the city, and this idea was confirmed by the great bell of Santa Sophia, which suddenly sent forth its solemn and awful peal on the dead stillness of the night.

As he hastened along, the windows of many of the houses were thrown up hastily, and half-dressed men and women gazed forth

in alarm, many of whom rushed from their houses, and hastened towards the quarter whence myriad of sparks and vast volumes of smoke were seen to mount into the sky.

"Where is this fire?" demanded Paoli of a Greek, one of a group hurrying towards the scene of destruction.

"In the great street leading from Santa Sophia to the hospital," exclaimed the men, gazing for a moment at the strange costume of the Corsican.

Paoli started. This was the street in which stood the mansion of the Merchant, Alviano. Dropping the cutlass he still carried in his hand, the Knight, with an anxious mind, followed the now great crowd hurrying forward eager to be spectators; many hoping to be plunderers.

The glare of the fire, as they advanced, lit the houses and streets with a radiance more dazzling than the day. The flames rose high above the intervening houses, shooting in spiral wreaths towards the crimsoned sky. The

shouts and cries from the men, and the wild shrieks of the women—the rapid tolling of the various bells of that quarter of the city—the galloping of the guards, with the glare of the fire flashing from their bright armour, altogether formed a sight and created a din which almost bewildered our hero.

At length, he came upon the scene of the disaster; and beheld, with horror, the entire side of the noble street in which stood Alviano's house, one vast sheet of flame. Thousands of human beings thronged the scene of danger; some, assisting to save the miserable and half-naked inhabitants; others, eager for plunder, perishing in the very act. It was a heart-rending sight; the mother shrieking for her child—the child for its lost mother. For a second, Giacinto stood appalled; but the next, he plunged madly through the mass, and paused not till he reached the blazing front of the Merchant's mansion. A circle of guards surrounded the spot, while numbers of men

were hurrying to and fro in wild confusion.

As he reached the place, Paoli beheld his own squire, Pulini, rushing from the mansion, bearing on his stout shoulders the Signor Alviano, their garments scorched and blazing. In a voice, fearfully distinct, even amid the roar and the crackling of the fire, the Merchant cried out—

“My child! my child! Ten thousand piastres, nay, all my wealth, to him who saves my child.”

But the wall of fire that now presented itself, appalled the stoutest heart.

With a cry of agony, Paoli dashed aside the mob; and, partly covering his head with his well-soaked garment, disappeared amid the flames, while a cry of horror burst from the spectators, as they beheld the doomed victim of gallantry or avarice thus rush madly upon destruction.

Still the fire raged on with unabated

violence, unchecked by the simple means used in those days. And when the morning sun broke in wintry splendour upon the scene of the past night's horrors, nothing remained of the splendid mansions that lined the noble street of Santa Sophia but a mass of blackened ruins and smoking timbers.

CHAPTER V.

THE HOLE IN THE WALL.

IN a large chamber, sumptuously furnished, the Merchant, Alviano, was reclining on a sofa, on the morning after the fire. By his side, sat our hero, altered in dress and appearance since we last introduced him to our readers, plunging amid the flames of the Merchant's house. His left arm was supported in a sling. His fine head of hair had totally vanished, excepting the few crisped and burnt edges round the crown : his forehead and face

were also somewhat scorched ; but otherwise he was sound and well, and in uncommon high spirits. The Signor Alviano was but slightly burnt about the hands and head, but much bruised. A young female was busy bathing his temples with a cooling lotion.

“Why, my son,” said the Merchant, “you bear scorching better than a salamander. You scarcely heed the suffering from your burns.”

“My dear sir,” replied Paoli, “the delight of saving my beloved Agnes would blunt the agony of martyrdom at the stake. But here comes the Signora Tolmeo. How fares it now with your beloved charge, Signora ?”

“Excepting the loss of a few ringlets, and the effect of terror, she has sustained no injury, and will, I make no doubt, be able to rise to-morrow, and join us at breakfast. She almost raves of your wonderful strength and gallantry, Signor Paoli, and your marvellous appearance

at such a moment. In truth, I am as anxious to hear of your adventures as Agnes."

While Paoli is relating his recent dangers to his anxious and curious auditors, we will account for the almost unlooked-for salvation of Agnes from the flames that utterly destroyed the Merchant's mansion, though the stores beneath remained uninjured, being arched with stone in case of fire, which frequently happened in the narrow streets of Byzantium, where most of the houses were built of wood.

When the Corsican, with desperate restlessness of life, plunged amid the flames, his well-soaked and muddy garment, to a certain extent, protected him in his first rush through the wall of fire. Scorched and half suffocated with the flame and smoke that filled the hall, amid the crackling of the burning timbers, the falling of beams, and the fearful roar of the destructive element, Giacinto, as he rushed

up the half-consumed stairs, caught the shrieks of female voices.

Leaping, with desperate energy, over an awful chasm in the stairs, he gained, after incredible efforts, the corridor leading to the sleeping apartments of Agnes and the Signora Tolmeoo—fortunately for the latter, she had gone that night to visit a sick friend—as he rushed on, battling the flames, and escaping, by miracle, the falling rafters, he heard a crash behind him, followed by an increased roar of the furious element. He cast a look back—retreat that way was gone, for the platform and entire remaining stairs had disappeared. At that moment, through the smoke, he beheld Agnes upon her knees, her head pressed upon the shoulder of her favourite attendant, and her fine hair streaming wildly over her garments. The platform on which she knelt was, as yet, untouched by the flames; but, like a devouring fiend, on came the fire, climbing

the pillars, and greedily shooting its forked tongues over the platform on one side.

A fervent thanksgiving to God burst from the lips of the Knight, as he shouted—

“Agnes, my beloved one, throw yourself from the platform into the arms of one who will perish with, or save you.”

With a wild cry of delight and unbounded astonishment, the maiden started to her feet at the sound of that well-known voice.

“Courage, light of my life,” he exclaimed, extending his arms; “the spot you stand on trembles.”

Without hesitation, Agnes threw herself into his embrace. He caught her with ease in his powerful arms, and even aided her attendant, who leaped after. The next moment, the flames rushed, as it were, rejoicingly over the spot. The remaining pillars snapped, and down went the platform, thundering into the flaming abyss below.

Fortunately, the fall of the platform and the adjoining chamber, for the instant crushed the fire between the Corsican and a door leading to the balcony looking out from the back. Pressing Agnes close to his breast, and covering her head with his upper garment, he burst through the flames and through the door. Here, also, all was flame and smoke. Followed by the horror-stricken attendant, whose screams were fearful, as she felt the scorching heat, he gained the balcony. Volumes of flame were bursting from all the windows of the house, revealing everything beneath in startling distinctness. As he appeared in the balcony, a wild cheer burst from numerous voices below, and a tall ladder was raised against the balcony by a man, whom Paoli at once knew to be his squire, Pulini.

“My master—my beloved master!” shouted Pulini, as he distinguished the lofty figure and countenance of the Corsican.

The descent of the ladder was a perilous

feat, for the flames rushed out of the windows below in vast sheets ; but Paoli did not hesitate. He commenced to descend, though the ladder shook with his weight. The poor girl, who followed him, uttered a cry of horror ; and, terrified by the flames that burst out even on the light balcony on which they stood, staggered and fell forward. With a desperate effort, the gallant Corsican grasped her by the garments. The next instant, before he could recover his hold of the ladder, it snapped ; and all the Knight could do was to clasp his beloved in his arms and leap forward, so as to take the shock of the fall on himself. But the forethought and activity of Pulini saved them from broken limbs. He had covered the ground beneath the balcony with every available article sufficiently soft to break their fall. Paoli escaped with a severely bruised arm. Agnes was almost unhurt ; but the poor girl was senseless when taken up, though she eventually recovered after a tedious and painful illness.

In the mean time, Paoli related to the Signor Alviano and the Signora Tolmeo his seizure by some unknown enemy, and his most fortunate escape. In vain was every effort of thought exerted in conjectures as to who this unknown enemy was. Paoli knew of no human being to whom he could impute the outrage. Pisani had been forced to sail the night before the fire for Negropont; but during the two days of Paoli's absence, he had never ceased to exert himself to discover the cause. Day and night, Pulini, with a strong party of his Venetian crew, searched every suspected habitation in the city. As to Agnes, her alarm was great; and, had a few days more passed without tidings, she would have considered her lover lost to her for ever. And we may justly say—so firm and devoted was her heart—that the blow would have rankled there for ever.

“How did this fire originate, Signor?” de-

manded Paoli. "The loss must be terrible to the merchants residing in that street."

"Only trifling," replied the Signor Alviano, "Few had any merchandize of value in their stores. The only three really wealthy merchants residing in Santa Sophia, were, like myself, provided against accidents by vaults built purposely to resist fire! How the fire originated, is not yet known. It broke out in the house adjoining mine, and so extremely rapid was the destructive element, that if Pulini, who spent the night out hunting for your place of concealment—for your worthy squire would have it you were kidnapped—had not arrived first at the scene of disaster, and burst in our doors, we should have perished. But the flames had already pierced our mansion in three places. A heavy gale was blowing. Blinded with smoke and terror, I was rushing into the midst of the flames, thinking to reach my child, when Pulini seized me and carried me off like a child; let

me down, and then ran off to the back of the mansion with ladders, intending to save my beloved daughter. But without you, my son, my child would have perished; when, in truth, the days of Alviano had been numbered."

Nearly a week passed, before Paoli beheld his beautiful betrothed; but the meeting amply repaid our hero for the dangers and sufferings he had undergone.

The following week, Admiral Pisani and the entire Venetian and Catalan fleet were expected before Byzantium; for it was evident that a contest must take place between the combined fleets. The Emperor's galleys were now completely ready for sea; and Greek and Venetian equally longed for a trial of strength; for while things remained as they were, commerce beyond the Propontis was at a stand. The galleys of Admiral Doria swarmed in the Archipelago, and the young nobility of Genoa, whose numbers were said to amount to

more than a thousand, longed to commence hostilities.

Paoli, having a day to spare, determined to pass an hour or so in endeavouring to discover the place where he so narrowly escaped falling a victim to an unknown enemy. With Pulini, and six men belonging to his own galley, he commenced his search. After a considerable time spent in vain, he recollected the ruinous state of many of the houses about the place from which he had escaped. On mentioning this to their Greek guide, he said—

“Let us go to the plague-ground.”

To this place they at once proceeded; and, after a long search amid the miserable houses, Paoli, at length, recognized the ditch into which he had thrown himself, and the high wall about it. They then proceeded to the front. The house had once been a large and substantial one; but not a vestige of a window frame was now left. The roof also had fallen in; and the walls, which were of stone, were

dripping with moisture and stained by mildew. No door of any kind barred their entrance.

"This is certainly the house," said Paoli to his squire. But my worthy friends have walked off with the door. Take care, on entering, to avoid the trap down which I was precipitated."

"It makes me shudder," said Pulini, "to think of the fearful risk you ran. But here is the hole, sure enough, and open, and no sign of a trap or door to it.' It looked as black as night below them.

One of the sailors threw a ponderous stone down to try the depth, and a loud splash of water followed.

"That is singular," remarked the Corsican, as he proceeded along the narrow hall. "There was no water there a few nights ago."

"I remember having heard," said the Greek guide, "that the vaults under this plague-ground are inundated in the winter by the

waters of the Golden Horn ; for you see this spot lies very low ; and the deep fosses are filled now to overflowing from the same source."

Paoli examined several chambers ; and at length entered the very one in which he had been fastened to the wall. Not an article of any sort remained in the room ; but on the floor it was easily seen that a quantity of blood had fallen.

"The wretched old hag no doubt perished on that spot," said the Corsican. "But what have we here?" he continued, as he advanced to examine the hole in the wall, where the eye-bolt had been fixed. A paper was nailed just over the orifice. Paoli took it down, and read aloud the few lines on it, written in good Italian :—

"We are sorry to find that the Signor Paoli did not relish his place of abode. Twenty-four hours longer would have consigned him to one, from whence there could be no return.

'Tis the chances of war. Let the Signor Paoli take care; for there are twenty poniards in Byzantium ready sharpened, and thirsting for revenge."

Paoli smiled as he tore the paper to pieces; while Pulini stood confounded.

"Say nothing of this, Pulini," said the Knight; "it is needless alarming the Signor Alviano's family, by imparting to them the idle boast of a gang of baffled ruffians. Let us just have a look at the rooms above."

They entered several, all capable of being inhabited; but perfectly bare of all the necessities of life. Not a single article remained.

"They have certainly not left a vestige behind them," said Paoli. "It is quite useless either continuing our investigation, or tormenting our minds about such miscreants."

"Signor," exclaimed the squire, in a very exasperated tone, "the sooner we sail to meet our old foes the better. We can see them, and feel them, and, thanks to the Virgin, make

them feel us in return. But these lurking assassins, strike in the dark. I thought, when we quitted Venice, that we had done with masks, and poniards, and such like cowardly weapons. But here, *cospetto*, we have twenty sharpening for us."

"Ready sharpened, Pulini," returned Paoli, with a hearty laugh. "Cheer up, my worthy friend. In a few days, we shall have too much to do even to think of such impotent threats."

Paoli was right. The very next morning Pisani arrived in his galley, with the intelligence that the Venetian and Catalan fleet had left their harbours, and were in full sail for Byzantium.

Pisani, was overjoyed at seeing his friend, the Corsican, safe and sound. He listened to his account of his adventures with surprise; but, like the Knight, himself, he felt little uneasiness concerning the threat of the twenty poniards.

"We shall," he remarked, "have scarcely an hour to spare on shore; for there is not a shadow of doubt that this dispute between our rival republics will be settled in the waters of the Propontis. Doria and his galleys have left their winter quarters; and, before long, we shall see them before Byzantium."

If Paoli was indifferent with respect to the threats of his enemies, not so was Pulini. There was no selfishness in his uneasiness, for the honest squire only cared for his beloved master. Not even from the Arsenal to the hired mansion the Signor Alviano inhabited, would he permit his master to go, without wearing some defensive armour; while he secretly had him watched by four of the crew, natives of Corsica, shipped as part of the seamen at Venice. Agnes knew nothing of the threatened poniards. Nevertheless, she felt more easy in her mind, on observing that her lover took some precautions against any further attack of his unknown enemies.

For the last few days, the merchant had been busy in removing the ruins of his once splendid mansion, from over the vaults, and in recovering the valuable stores beneath. He felt increasing anxiety for the termination of the war, and most desirous for the union of his child with Paoli. He looked upon the events, forthcoming, with deep interest and some apprehension, being aware of the deep affection of his gentle daughter for the Corsican ; aware, also, of the impetuosity and reckless chivalry of his intended son-in-law, who would be sure, in the eager desire of performing an action of note, to do some desperate feat. He trembled, at times, when the thought rushed through his mind, that, should the Corsican fall in the coming strife, his daughter's happiness would be wrecked for ever.

At length, the combined fleets of Arragon and Venice entered the Bosphorus. Seventy five noble galleys anchored before Byzantium. Agnes beheld this magnificent sight from a

balcony; and, if her sight was gratified by beholding so imposing and picturesque a scene, her little heart beat somewhat faster when she thought of what was to follow.

The Catalan galleys were commanded by one of the bravest admirals in the service of Spain, Ponsio De Santa Paz, who merited a better fate than fell to his lot.

CHAPTER VI.

PLOT AND PROJECTS.

ON the ramparts of the tower of Galata stood three individuals, looking with extreme interest upon the galleys of the Venetian and Catalan squadron, as they majestically swept up the Port of Byzantium and anchored.

The three individuals were the Commander of the tower, his worthy lieutenant, and their villanous associate, Paulo Montoni.

"Those are noble galleys, well manned and handled," exclaimed Montoni, who, a sailor

from his childhood, loved all belonging to sea-faring life.

"The galleys of Doria are very much larger," remarked Campaldino; "and half the nobility of Liguria walk their decks."

"*Cospetto*, there will be some broken heads," said Achilles, rubbing his own huge caput, and yawning terrifically. "What a botch you made of that last job, Montoni; not that I know much about it. The only part of your conference I heard the other night, was that the Corsican split your respectable mother's head with a pitcher—a curious weapon, that, for a Knight."

"Tut, man," interrupted Montoni, "you were too drunk to hear any thing right. I never had a mother, as far as I know, nor did that cursed Corsican kill the old woman."

"Well, it matters very little, *amico*," returned Achilles, "I wish it was time for dinner; but, as I was saying—*cospetto*, how

remarkably hungry this keen breeze off the Propontis, makes one feel—It matters very little how an old woman is killed. What's to be done now?"

"Why, you drone," exclaimed Campaldino, "you have done nothing this last three months, but eat and drink. Now you must fight a little."

"Eh, *per Bacco*, be it so. I am ready. But, upon my soul, I do not see much use in that, if there is no plunder to be got. I never did fight for glory; and it's rather late to begin. Tell me, *amico mio*, is there no chance of catching this Corsican during the approaching contest?"

"None whatever that I can see," replied Montoni. "He commands one of the finest galleys in the whole fleet; and his crew are all ready to sacrifice life for him."

Turning to Campaldino, who stood wrapped in gloomy thought, gazing out over the fair

Propontis, as it lay rippling and sparkling under the cheering beams of a winter's sun—

"You said," observed Montoni, "when we next met you had a plan in your head to unfold. What is it?"

"In the name of all the saints," exclaimed Achilles, "come down from this. We are only filling our stomachs with east wind, which, truth to say, never sat easy upon mine when empty. It's near feeding time, too."

"Did I not know that you can fight at a pinch," testily exclaimed the Commander of Galata, as he led the way from the battlements, "I would not take the weight, in beef, of that carcase of thine a week to feed thee."

"*Cospetto*, Andrea, don't grumble. Do you remember when, tumbled over by a blow of a huge stone from the ramparts of Capraja, how this carcase of mine, in a hot, sweltering day in August, carried you on its back, near a

mile, to the boats, eh? Was I lazy then, Andrea? Only show me a prospect of something, after twenty-four hours of as hard fighting as you please, and I am your man."

' Well, well; come below; there is a flask or two of Cyprus left—and I will let you hear a proposal I have to make, for I am tired of this cursed old tower, and of this part of the world altogether."

"St. Antonio! and so am I," responded Montoni, "especially as my trade in Byzantium is knocked on the head. The Emperor has ordered all the old ruins in the plague-ground to be cleared away, and a strong fort, as it commands the Horn, to be built on the spot."

"Now," observed Achilles, making himself comfortable, by drawing his chair near to the fire, after making, as he termed it, a moderate dinner, "let us hear what you have to say."

"In the first place," commenced Campaldino, "there is little to be gained by holding the command of this tower; and very little prospect of a higher one, as long as the unprovided sons of our nobility come out here on speculation. In the next place, we have lost our zebec; and even if we had another, our cruising, for a long time to come is over. You remember, Achilles, our attempt on the Island of Capraja, some two or three years back?"

"I ought to remember it, Andrea. I reminded you a while ago, how I carried you, like a dead turtle, on my back."

"Yes, I remember it well, and the infernal beating we got from those half-savage islanders. I don't see, even now, what induced you to join that ill-planned expedition."

"Plunder, my worthy *amico*, plunder."

"Plunder!" echoed Furiano. "Yes; you talked of something of the kind at the time;

but, for the life of me, I can't imagine what plunder there's to be had in an island a man may swim round in six hours. Why, the whole island wouldn't grow enough wine to keep me during the winter."

"And yet, to that very island is my attention directed. We failed before, it is true, for the expedition was ill-planned. We knew nothing of the locality, and were quite ignorant of the existence of a fortress as strong, and as imposing, as any you may see from the summit of this tower."

Achilles stared at his Commander—pitched another log on the fire—filled his own goblet to the brim—and then, nodding his huge head, said—

"Go on, Captain; let us hear what the *Diavolo* you are going to propose?"

"Well, I will enlighten you," returned Andrea. "Montoni can give you all kinds of information with regard to the capabilities of the island in growing wine; for he will

tell you that it grows not only a great quantity of grapes, but that the wine made from them, nearly, if not fully, equals this Cyprus."

"And what the *diavolo* brought you upon the island?" demanded Furiani, turning, with a look of surprise, upon the Italian.

"Oh! as to that," returned Montoni, "it is easily accounted for. I fled; or rather, I should say, was recommended change of air, that of Livorno, getting rather hot for me. I was so pressed as to time, that I was glad to sail on the instant in a small tartana bound for Capraja. I thought a few months' residence there might be to my advantage, being then a younger man, and a devilish good-looking fellow to boot. You may laugh, Achilles, but my nose was not broken then. I captivated a Caprese maiden of the household of the Marchese Damari. Well, we are all subject to weak moments, and I fell in love with the girl, and was persuaded to offer

myself as a valet to the Marchese, his former man having died suddenly of a brain fever."

"Are you spinning a yarn, as you sailors call it?" demanded Furiani, turning his dark eyes upon his companion. "Is there a word of truth in what you are relating?"

"*Per Bacco*, you are polite, Achilles," said Montoni, laughing. "But it's all truth. You are, perhaps, surprised at a man of my genius taking the place of a valet. But, *patienza*! I had something else in view besides pressing the hands of this fair *ragazza*. The Marchese, a fine looking man at that time, resided in the old castle, built by one of his ancestors. A fine stately building it is: either he or his father built the fortress that now commands and guards the harbour."

"Fill your goblet, Paulo, you are getting very dry," said Furiani. "St. Antony! What will all this turn to in the end?"

"*Aspetta, aspetta, amico mio*! It will come

to something by-and-by. But if you do not keep quiet, the wine will be out before my story is done. The Marchese," continued he, is the feudal lord of Capraja and his revenue is much more considerable than you would suppose. A Faro is kept lighted on the fortress hill; and the harbour is one of the finest, for its size, in the Mediterranean. Hundreds of vessels take refuge there, when gales blow out of the Gulf Genoa. All the inhabitants pay a certain tax. But now to the pith of what I have to say. The Marchese, after asking me a few questions, accepted my services for a time; and I took up my abode in the castle. The marchese's father had married an Italian lady, one of the wealthiest heiresses in all Italy, especially in land, houses, and jewels. The Marchese, when married, converted the whole into gold, and carried it, with his bride, to his favorite Island. The wealth, so realised, is said to be enormous, and is secured in im-

mense iron chests—in some strong chamber of the castle.”

Achilles now looked somewhat more interested.

“These particulars,” pursued Paulo, “I learned during a three months’ residence in the castle; finding time, notwithstanding the caresses of pretty Annette, hang heavy on my hands; and stumbling, by chance, upon the Marchesa’s jewel case, one moonlight night, when I was struck with the beauty of the rippling sea, I induced a Capraja lad, who was settling his nets, to let me have an hour’s pull outside the pier. We were hailed by the lookout; for a strict watch is kept up, as they are always dreading an attack from the Genoese. The lad answered, and we were soon out. It was blowing off the Island, and I was hoisting a sail, when the boy remonstrated; but being very obstinate by nature, I overruled him. We went too far to turn back; and about noon

next day, I landed upon a very pleasant beach, in the Ligurian territory—made the lad a present of a few dollars—for which he returned me as many curses—and begged him to present my regards to the Marchese, and express my regret, that the solitude of his Island was too much for my nerves. It was not till next day that I recollected I had forgotten to send back the Marchesa's jewel case.

“I have now said all I have to say excepting one particular, which is, perhaps, the most important. In one of my rambles, by a singular accident, I discovered a passage from the Island to the sea. You know that Capraja is considered perfectly inaccessible, in any part, excepting through the harbour, and in face of the very formidable fortress that commands and blocks the entrance into the interior. I could, therefore, conduct, with the greatest ease and secrecy, any number of men into the interior of the Island. The Castle Damari

stands more than a mile from the town which contains near three thousand inhabitants; or, at least five hundred fighting men. Now, Signor Campaldino will let you know his scheme, for, as usual, you were asleep last night, when we first talked over this business."

During the time occupied by the Italian in relating the above, Campaldino sat with his one eye fixed intently on the blazing wood, wrapped in deep thought. As Montoni finished, he turned to his companions, saying—

"I will briefly let you into my projects. A few days ago, I attended a meeting of officers before the Commander of Pera. A Genoese Carrick had run the gauntlet through the Venetian fleet to convey important intelligence to our Commander. Aboard the Carrick, were several of our young Ligurian nobles amongst them—one Filippo Baracco—I knew formerly in Genoa. In the course of conversation, he

mentioned, in speaking of his own adventures, that, through the interest of his cousin, the Count Durazzo, he had been appointed Governor of Capraja—for an expedition, at that time, was fitting out to take possession of that Island—When just ready for sea, the outbreak against Venice took place; and, at the same time, a dispute with France, which suddenly withdrew her entire force from Corsica. The expedition was countermanded; the men were drafted into the galleys fitting out to proceed against the Venetian Admiral; and an additional force was despatched to Corsica; for there is now every reason to dread an outbreak there—‘so thus,’ added young Baracco, laughing, ‘ended my governorship.’ ‘Are you aware,’ I asked, that Giacinto Paoli, son of Count Paoli, the most daring of the Corsican rebels, and who slew my father—then General of our forces in Corsica—is, at this moment, serving under the Venetian banner, and

actually in command of one of the finest galleys in the fleet, at this moment at anchor in the Port of Byzantium?" 'Yes,' returned Baracco, 'I knew he commanded a fine galley, and devilish good reason I had to know it. He is a gallant, high-spirited, and generous fellow, let him be ever so great a rebel; though why he should be styled a rebel for defending his native land, I cannot imagine.'

"Seeing me look astonished, he continued—
'When I lost my intended governorship, I embarked with my cousin, the Count Durazzo, to join Doria in chasing some Venetian carricks and galleys in the Archipelago. We were attacked by Paoli, in his vessel, The Lion, and, after an obstinate fight—for, to tell the truth, we were double her size, and full of men (but unfortunately disaffected ones)—and, being captured, he, by a very simple *ruse*, enticed our prizes, who were lying in port, to put to sea. He captured them also; and,

finally, put us all to ransom. With singular generosity, after all his sufferings from our Republic, he left the Count Durazzo to fix the amount of ransom. He then landed us. My cousin had promised me, when I came out, that I should have the command of the Tower of Galata, of course without knowing it was in your hands. You would, doubtless, have received a higher appointment.' 'Which I must beg leave to doubt very much,' I replied, laughing. I have neither high birth nor interest to push me on. But I will tell you what I will do, Baracco. You said, even when appointed Governor of an Island not then conquered, you felt no great fancy to being shut up in a place some fifteen miles in circumference. Now, ask me no questions, but say, if I give up to you the command of this tower and fort, will you use your great interest with your cousin, the Count Durazzo—should I succeed in gaining possession of that said island of Capraja, and get me appointed Governor?"

‘By the Pope,’ replied he, ‘I will do more. I will hand over to you my letters patent, which I still hold. The power is mine to transfer them, and was purposely given me at my own request. All we have to do is to alter the name; and, besides, I may venture to say, you shall be backed and helped by all my cousin’s interest, the moment this contest ends. If favourable to Genoa, on your return there, you will have hundreds of volunteers to aid you, provided the funds are forthcoming. As to me, *per Bacco*, my ransom, easy as it was, has drained my exchequer. One reason for my wishing for a temporary command, till something better turns up here, is that, to say the truth, I have the prospect, after two years, of having the command of this colony.’

“I closed at once with Philipppo Baracco; and now all I have to say is, that the moment this contest, with which we shall, as guardians of this tower and fort, have nothing to do, is over, I intend chartering a good craft for Genoa,

put our spoils, etc., aboard, and, when we reach that city, follow up the plan you have heard. Should we even fail in gaining possession of the fortress by surprise, we are certain of sacking the Castle of Damari, and of gaining possession of the crusader's treasures. Afterwards, there will be a fair field for adventures in Corsica ; for I know enough of the islanders to be able to say positively—they will break out into open rebellion the moment the French gendarmerie are withdrawn from the island.”

“By the mass, I rather like your scheme,” said Furiani. “I feel satisfied the fortress of Capraja would prove a much more agreeable residence than this. Besides, the climate here is only fit for a salamander. Were it not for my system of damping my interior with the juice of the grape, I should have been scorched to a cinder ere this.”

“It will be better,” observed Montoni,” to

purchase a fast-sailing caravel, which will cost less in the end, and look more respectable on our reaching Genoa. Besides, we may do a little business on the voyage. The Archipelago will be swarming with crafts, now that the two rival fleets are in the Propontis. I can find twenty first-rate hands."

"But what do you intend to do with your wife — eh, Paulo?" suddenly interrupted Achilles. "Shall you bring her with us?"

"No, by the mass, no," replied the Italian. "Our union was one of convenience. In fact, she belongs to the gang: that is, she becomes the wife of the leader, whoever he may be. And I may as well say it now, she has, by this time, absconded with my black friend, whom she was going to marry. I believe my broken nose hastened the catastrophe. They are gone, I believe, to Gallipoli."

"If we could only get this Paoli with us," observed Campaldino, "the reward offered

for his capture by the Genoese Government, would fit out our expedition to Capraja."

"Well, we shall see," said Montoni.
"Perhaps, during this approaching battle, something may turn up to throw him into our hands."

CHAPTER VII.

THE BATTLE

ALL now became bustling anxiety throughout Byzantium. Doria and his fleet had entered the Sea of Marmora, passed close to the coast on which stood the stronghold of the Grecian Empire—and then, steering for the opposite shore, the fleet was drawn up in order of battle.

Admiral Pisani hoisted the signal that in four hours, he would weigh anchor, and engage the enemy.

After buckling on his armour, Paoli hastened to take leave of his betrothed and her father. Agnes received her lover with much agitation, and despite every effort of her mind, with tears.

"Why weep, dearest?" exclaimed the Knight as he pressed the fair hand he held to his lips. "A soldier's bride must summon her courage; and the trumpet's blast, should raise smiles, not tears."

"Ah, Giacinto," replied the maiden—looking with fond admiration, and yet dread, upon the noble figure of her betrothed—"to man the trumpet's blast, only raises the spirit and quickens the blood; but to the mother, the wife, the lover, it drives back the chilled blood to the heart. No, dearest, you cannot feel like our timid sex. In the midst of horrid strife, there is no room for reflection. But we, in the agony of suspense—in the solitude of our chambers, with our thoughts

fixed on those we love—our imaginations, sleeping or waking, excited by a thousand fearful fancies—”

The utterance of Agnes here failed her : she could not finish what her heart prompted her to say ; but leaning her fair face on the mailed breast of her lover, she gave way to tears.

Paoli soothed in a measure, the grief of Agnes, who was rendered more apprehensive than she otherwise would have been by the late attempt upon her lover's life.

“To-morrow, dearest,” said Giacinto, “will end this strife. Who will be the victor, can be known only to the Almighty. That the banner of St Mark may float triumphant, is my earnest prayer. We certainly out-number the enemy.”

“Ah, yes,” interrupted Agnes ; “but Pisani said the vessels of Genoa are double your size.”

"The more glory in beating them, my beloved," said Paoli, with a smile and a kiss which brought back the rich color to the pale cheek of the maiden.

They parted as fond lovers part—the Knight to his galley—the maiden, with a beating heart, to the solitude of her chamber. She cast one look from the window—out upon the then troubled waters of the Propontis. Dark masses of wintry clouds hung over the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus; and fierce and sudden gusts of wind swept over the city, with a moaning and threatneing sound.

In the arsenal, Giacinto found the Signor Alviano, Pisani, and many of the Venetian residents. Paoli's galley was warping out, followed by those of Pisani and the Count De Loridani.

"Well, my son," said the Signor Alviano, striving to look cheerful. "You are about to try the issue. May God grant the banner of St Mark the victory! But this is fearful

weather. There is every appearance of a fierce tempest brooding over the sea. The wind howls most dismally."

"A good stiff breeze, my dear sir, is very desirable," returned Paoli. "Our vessels are much more manageable then, than in calms. Those Greeks handle their crafts but indifferently; and *per Bacco*, with seeming hesitation."

"Never trust the Greeks, except when you have the advantage on your side," whispered the Merchant, as he affectionally embraced the Corsican, when he stepped from the galley on the quay.

As the galley weighed and ran out of harbour, they formed into a line, with the Admiral's galley, from which waved the gorgeous banner of St Mark. It was a spirit-stirring, animating sight. The day, was cold and inclement. At intervals, fierce gusts of wind swept over the narrow sea; and vast and threatening masses of lurid clouds passed on at

times, allowing the wintry sun to shine for a brief period. Its rays then fell upon the countless multitude that lined the shore, the ramparts, and bastions of Byzantium, The decks of the galleys were crowded with mailed Knights, whose shields hung along the side of the vessels, and when the sun shone upon them, resembled a solid defence of sparkling steel.

In the far distance could be seen the ships of Doria, breasting the wild waves of the straits; at times hidden in the descending shower, then, as the vapours passed away, becoming distinctly visible. The decks of the Genoese men-of-war, also appeared as one mass of steel-clad figures.

Notwithstanding the efforts of Pisani, it was near sun-set before the fleets engaged; and, at that period, the gale had increased to a hurricane. In the gloom, then, of a heavy tempest, commenced the strife. Perfectly acquainted with the navigation of the

Bosphorus, and having pilots who were aware of the currents and shoals that abound on the Asiatic side, Doria gave the signal to his fleet to run in amid the rocks and shoals of that dangerous shore.

The gallant Admiral of the Catalans, Ponsio De Santa Paz, followed without hesitation ; as also did Paoli, Pisani, and Loridani, all whose pilots were well acquainted with the channels. The Catalans ignorant of the dangers, fought desperately, but in vain. Ten of their best galleys perished on the sunken rocks.

Notwithstanding the fearful storm, that gained ground as the night came on, galley grappled with galley with bitter animosity ; while the agitated waters beat with frightful roar over the sunken rocks that were scattered around. As the day closed, the Grecian galleys fled ; still the battle raged. Paoli had daringly followed Santa Paz, and fixed himself to a galley of superior size, full of armed knights. Pisani passed him with a loud cheer

from his crew, as he made fast to another. The war-cry of Paoli was answered by the crew of the Genoese galley, who shouted their commander's name, Grimaldi.

The strife commenced, while the galleys were carefully handled by their pilots, to keep them off the sunken rocks. Fierce and bloody was the contest; for night shed its dismal veil over the combatants. Still the battle-axe of Paoli swept the deck of the Genoese with terrible might. His crew had been reinforced before he left Byzantium by many volunteer knights and Venetians, who were excited by the example of the Corsican.

At length, the decks of the Genoese galley were gained, and Grimaldi, himself, was taken prisoner by Paoli, who spared his life. Grimaldi then surrendered his galley, and retired from the struggle, while Paoli, during the remainder of that awful night, fought with the same gallantry and extreme good fortune. He

rescued from destruction the galley of Santa Paz, after striking on a sunken rock, and towed the vessel into safe water. Two other galleys fell into his hands ; and, when morning broke, Pisani gave the signal to his galleys to regain the port of Byzantium. But few survived the horrors of that night to obey the signal.

Historians of that time describe this battle, fought in darkness during an awful tempest, and rendered memorable on account of the incredible bitterness and fierceness of the combatants, as the most sanguinary contest of that century.

The galley of Pisani, dismantled and shattered, was taken in tow by Paoli, and the Count Lorigiani. The younger Pisani had, alas ! perished with his galley and his gallant crew upon the sunken rocks of that fatal shore.

As the sun rose, gloomy and lowering, over

the fatal scene of the last night's contest, the prospect presented a sad picture to contrast with the glorious spectacle of the preceding evening.

The sea was covered with spars, masts, boats, and half-drowned wretches, clinging with fearful tenacity to pieces of wreck. The Asiatic shore was strewn with corpses, and stranded galleys. As the day increased, each party could more easily discover vestiges of its own loss than of triumph over the enemy. Thirteen of the finest galleys of Genoa were dashed to pieces on the rocks ; six were swept away down the channel of the Bosphorus. Ten Catalans perished ; and fourteen Venetian galleys had been captured or destroyed. Eighteen hundred prisoners were taken by the Genoese ; and yet they claimed but a very doubtful victory ; for, if historians are to be believed, of their nobility alone, seven hundred perished. In fact, had not Pisani hoisted his signal to retreat, the battle was a drawn one.

Ponzio de Santa Paz, unable to survive his defeat, died of a broken heart.

Paoli's galley had suffered much in killed and wounded. He himself was severely injured, but still able to command. His faithful squire was so desperately hurt by a fallen mast, as to be unable to leave his couch. Several knights of note had fallen aboard *The Lion*. But the Corsican's share of glory was great; for he brought into the port of Byzantium the galley of Grimaldi, and two others, as prizes; besides about thirty prisoners of knightly rank.

Paoli felt greatly depressed at the fate of the gallant young Pisani. The Count Loridani lost in that fatal fight, his eldest son and two nephews, scions of the noble house of Contarini. The Admiral Pisani, was grieved in heart at the loss of his nephew; but the disgrace, as he conceived it, of his defeat, overpowered every other feeling. Santa Paz refused consolation, and never raised his head.

Universal lamentation reigned throughout the city ; for hundreds had to deplore the loss of relatives who had perished either by the sword or by shipwreck.

The Merchant Alviano received our hero with open arms, and thanksgivings at his safety ; for none of his wounds, though severe, were dangerous. Still, much as he wished it, and though his heart beat with anxiety to embrace his betrothed, he was, for a few days, unable to leave his galley.

Admiral Pisani, knowing that as soon as Doria could collect his scattered and damaged squadron, he would invest the port of Byzantium, merely staid to repair his shattered galley, and then sailed with the remnant of his fleet for Negropont.

Paoli was just able to leave his couch, when he received the Admiral's orders to weigh anchor, and proceed to Negropont ; but as it was his intention, the moment this battle was fought, to quit the Venetian service, the com-

mand of his galley was committed to the care of an experienced officer, who sailed for Venice with her and his two prizes to be delivered over to the Marchese Tiepolo.

The Corsican spent most part of the night in writing to his generous benefactor, the Marchese, expressing his deep gratitude, and his reasons for quitting the Venetian service. He also stated that the Signor Alviano held in his hands a large sum lodged to his account, as his proportion of the prizes he had taken since his departure from Venice.

The Count Grimaldi paid a heavy ransom for himself, and his officers, and galley; at the same time passing the highest encomiums on Paoli's gallantry and generosity; saying, moreover, that if ever he should be called into council upon the cause and subjugation of Corsica, his voice should always be in favour of Paoli's countrymen. The Signor Alviano approved highly of the manner his intended son-in-law acted.

The fourth day after the famous battle on the Bosphorus, not a Venetian bark remained within the harbour of Byzantium.

Our hero's meeting with Agnes more than compensated for all his perils. Again and again, he pressed her to his heart, and vowed that, except to serve his country, he would never more draw sword for a foreign ruler.

Pulini was rapidly recovering. In the meantime, Doria and his fleet entered the port of Byzantium. Cantacuzenus was forced to yield to the terms of the Genoese Admiral. He was induced to sign a separate treaty of peace with Genoa, stipulating to close all his ports against the Venetians and Catalans ; and further, that all Venetian merchants, settled in Byzantium, should depart the Emperor's dominions within a certain time. If, after that, they should be found within such dominions, their property should undergo confiscation, and their persons imprisonment. A Genoese governor, with a strong force and full powers, was appointed to

hold Pera and Galata, and to build new forts.

Satisfied with the terms he had gained, and the glory he had achieved, Admiral Doria returned to Genoa.

"You see, Giacinto," said the Merchant Alviano, one morning, after the departure of the Genoese Admiral, "you see, these Greeks are not to be trusted. Behold how they have left us. It was extremely fortunate I was so far prepared, before the result of this treaty was made known. However, I have nearly shipped all my stores and merchandize. Still we must defer your nuptials till our arrival in Italy. In the present state of this city, it would be unwise. No dependence can be placed on the Greeks. However, we have yet a few days."

"Can I do anything to expedite your movements," asked Paoli, extremely anxious to leave Byzantium, and hasten his union with Agnes.

"By-the-by, you certainly can save me a day or two," replied the Merchant, and that's something, as things are. If you will take this document to my Greek partner that was, the Signor Negreti, at Scutari, who is slightly indisposed; he will sign it in your presence. Put your own name to it as an attestation. It is our final settlement. You can be back by sunset."

Paoli, with his constant attendant, Pulini, proceeded at once; and, hiring a four-oared barge, pulled across for Scutari, though it blew half a gale, with every prospect of increasing. Still, as the strait is barely three miles across, our hero troubled himself but little on the score of the wind.

Not so his fair betrothed; for the gale rapidly increased into a fierce storm, lashing the narrow waters of the Propontis into sheets of foam. Agnes was walking with the Signora Tolmeo, on the terrace at the back of the

mansion, which looked out over the storm-tossed waters of the strait of Scutari.

"He will scarcely be able to cross to-night," said Agnes. What a dismal looking sea! I would rather he would remain at Scutari than risk the passage in a rowing barge."

"You may make yourself easy, *cara*," returned the Signora Tolmeo. "Depend on it, the Signor Paoli will cross, notwithstanding this gale. Those rowing barges are the safest and best on these narrow and squally seas. Besides, though not able to cross direct in the face of the gale, he can still make a landing below Pera, and cross the ferry over the Golden Horn."

Shortly after sunset, the gale suddenly lulled, and a slight fall of snow took place, a most unusual occurrence at Byzantium. A dead calm followed. Still, when the merchant returned home late, and entered the saloon, and found only the two females, he exclaimed—

"Where is Paoli? Is it possible he is not returned?"

"My dear father, he has not come back," said Agnes, rather anxiously. "And yet it has been quite calm these two hours. The sea, you know, ceases instantly with the wind, in the Straits.

"Humph!" uttered the merchant, without a shade of anxiety in his manner. "Our friend has probably staid for the night with the Signor Nigrete, and will return in the morning. Why, child, you don't say you are uneasy?" added he, seeing a shade pass over the face of his daughter. "Why, crossing to Scutari is no more than crossing a canal in Venice."

"Ah, father," rejoined Agnes, "remember how many a stately galley perished in the late storm and fight, even in these narrow waters."

"Pooh!" ejaculated the merchant, laughing; "if people will fight in storms and bump upon rocks and shoals, they must be ship-

wrecked. But I will send down to the quay.

The barge had not returned.

Morning came; and still the Knight was absent; and Agnes was in an agony of apprehension she knew not of what.

The merchant proceeded at once to the quay; and to his great astonishment, the first thing he saw was the identical barge lying quietly at her moorings. Wondering why Paoli delayed returning home, he called one of the crew who was loitering on the pier, and demanded when he had come back.

"At break of day, Signor," replied the man. "We lay the best part of the night in the bight below Pera, under the old town."

"What, then, you crossed yesterday in the gale, and the Signoi Paoli had to stay all night in the barge?"

"All night!" echoed the man, with a look of surprise. "No, surely, Signor. The Signor Paoli persisted in crossing in the face of

the storm. We had a perilous passage ; but we landed the Signor and his squire under the town early in the evening ; and he immediately started to walk back, crossing by the Ferry over the Horn."

Alviano looked amazed. The Greek boatman perceived that something wrong had occurred. The merchant gave the man a handful of coin, saying—

"Signor Paoli, strange to say, has not returned. Man your boat ; and proceed to the spot where you landed the Signor, and make every inquiry and spare no labour. You shall be well rewarded."

With a foreboding of evil and a heavy heart, the Signor Alviano returned to his mansion. Vainly he strove to conjecture what could have occurred to two strong men, passing through a thickly populated neighbourhood and in broad day.

Agnes met her father at the door of the saloon. His countenance betrayed his anxiety,

notwithstanding his efforts to conceal it. Throwing herself on the sofa, the maiden burst into a flood of tears. In vain her kind friend, and her father, strove to console her, and to prove to her the folly of giving way to such grief, when no just cause, as yet, existed to call it forth.

“It may be weak, perhaps unmaidenly,” said the gentle girl, in a desponding tone. “But, with only an affectionate father and a kind friend to witness my sorrow, I have not power of mind to struggle against this cruel blow to my peace. Something fatal has happened; my heart tells me so. ‘Never,’ said Giacinto, the other day, ‘never, Agnes, I promise you, if the power is left me, will I sleep, while in this land, from under the same roof which shelters you.’”

And bending her head upon the bosom of the Signora, she wept silently, but sadly.

As the day wore on, the merchant, seriously

alarmed, ordered his horse, and, with two attendants, set out for the place where Paoli had been landed, a distance of scarcely two leagues. He easily succeeded in tracing Paoli and his squire from the landing-place to the Geonese settlement of Pera. At the gate, leading to Byzantium, he also gained correct information ; for the warder remembered perfectly well the Knight and his squire passing through, and enquiring of him the shortest road to the ferry. He recommended the upper. He could not be mistaken ; for the stately figure of the Corsican was remarkable.

More and more astonished, the merchant proceeded to the Ferry. There, he was baffled. No such persons had passed either that day or the day before.

It was night before Alviano returned home, without having gained the slightest clue to the disappearance of Paoli and his squire, after their passing the gate of Pera. No hostilities

then existed between the Greeks, Venetians, or Genoese ; for the truce was strictly adhered to—and he could only conjecture that Paoli must have fallen into the power of some secret enemy ; but who that enemy was, he had no earthly means of discovering.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RETURN TO VENICE.

OUR fair readers can easily imagine the grief and distraction of a young fond heart, with its hopes crushed in the bud. Paoli was the maiden's first love. Reasoners upon human passions may say what they please with respect to first love; but in our simple thoughts, no second love is one half so pure and holy—so totally free from all worldly feelings as the first love of a maiden's heart.

Day after day passed in hopeless search.

Vain were the princely rewards offered by the distracted merchant. No trace of Paoli, or his squire, could be gained that could tend to unravel the mystery of their disappearance.

The Signor Alviano had sufficient interest with the Greek Government to cause a strict inquiry to be made in Pera, from the Governor there. The reply was that the truce agreed upon, had remained inviolate; and no such persons as Paoli and his squire had been molested by his orders. Alviano was stupified at the blow this inflicted on his daughter's peace. He beheld, with anguish, the fading cheek of his child; and bitterly deplored the fatal cause of all this sorrow, brought on by his sending Paoli to Scutari. He had fondly pictured to himself the decline of his life, blessed and soothed by the love and affection of his daughter and children. There was another and a secret spring acting on the heart of the merchant. From the very first, he had regarded the love Paoli had for his daughter,

with the greater delight and satisfaction, inasmuch as it promised to realise the dream of many a long year. And now, all was wrecked !

“ For what have I now toiled ? ” soliloquised Alviano, in the solitude of his chamber, “ for gold ? Will gold restore the bloom to the cheek of my child ? Will a gorgeous palace, and a train of dependents, give her back the bright hopes that are withered ? Never ! I know too well the heart of my child.”

And yet, Agnes Alviano strove nobly to hide from the anxious eye of a doting father the sorrow that was nestling in her heart of hearts. She met him with smiles—alas ! only the ghosts of the smiles of old. She talked with him of Venice ; said, she still felt satisfied that her lover would yet appear ; that some mysterious enemy had him in his toils, through which, with the aid of Providence, he would yet break. At times, indeed, Agnes would endeavour to think as she spoke ; and,

in the sanguine expectations of the Signora Tolmeo, she endeavoured to believe.

Time had, meanwhile moved on ; the Signor Alviano could no longer delay embarking for Venice. Money and letters were left with a Greek merchant, in case Paoli should appear after their departure.

At length, with heavy hearts and broken spirits, the merchant and his daughter, with the Signora Tolmeo, embarked in a noble galley, chartered to convey them to the city of the waves.

It was a bright morning in the month of March, that the merchant and his family sailed from the Grecian capital. As the vessel glided with a favourable breeze from the shore, the sun's rays fell dazzlingly upon tower and fort, cupola, and palace. The line of beautifully diversified coast that runs along both sides of those narrow seas—the numerous towers and strong forts covering the hill tops—the Propontis covered with picturesque barks, that then, as

well as now, frequented these confined waters, all presented so beautiful and unequalled a sight, that even Agnes, who gazed from the deck of the galley upon a prospect she was never again to behold, could not but express her admiration, though tears filled her eyes as she did so ; for her imagination pictured her lover pining somewhere in dreary captivity in the land she was leaving for ever.

At length, after a tedious and protracted passage, Alviano beheld the towers and palaces of Venice rise from the bosom of the sleepy lagunes.

"Twenty years," sighed the merchant, as he stood upon the deck, with his daughter leaning on his arm, "have passed since I left yonder city. I return," he mentally added, "wealthy, but heart-stricken. But my child will yet revive. Providence can cure, as well as inflict the wound. Money can purchase prayers." The merchant hesitated, for his

mind was somewhat of a higher tone than the superstition of the age.

Laying his hand on the arm of his thoughtful daughter, he said, pointing to the yet distant, but yet distinctly visible domes of Venice—

“Thirty and one years have elapsed, my beloved child, since your father entered yonder city, an exile, unknowing and unknown, with only a few scudi in his possession. But I had youth, and an enterprising and untiring disposition; and Fortune, till then most unkind, smiled upon me.”

“And whence, beloved father, did you come? I have often heard you say, you were only an adopted son of the Venetian Republic. Whenever I teased you with questions, your reply was always playful but left me still ignorant of the name of the land that gave you birth.”

“Because, light of my heart, you were as happy as the fondest parent could wish his dar-

ling to be. My thoughts were then centred upon Venice as my resting-place, but now my dreams carry me further. Thy ancestors, my sweet child, were Corsican, and of ancient and noble descent."

"Corsican!" echoed Agnes, with a start, and a look of pleasure, while the rich colour came back so suddenly to her cheek, that the heart of the father beat quicker with new-raised hopes of returning health and spirits to his daughter.

"Even so, dearest. Corsica is the land of our fathers; and, more than that, we are connected, by ties of blood, with the noble house of Paoli."

Agnes clasped her hands.

"Were you told this by my ——" But she could not bring out the name.

Her sire understood her well.

"No, no, my love. I did not derive this information from him, but from Pulini, who

recognised me, though years had gone by. Wait yet a little while, and you shall hear all of your father's eventful life; and, trust me, I know not why, but I feel, at this moment, like one inspired—devoutly believing that Providence, which has hitherto protected and smiled upon my exertions, will yet restore the lost Paoli to you and to his country."

"Oh, father!" and the deeply expressive eyes of Agnes were fixed upon his with such love and devotion, that the merchant pressed her to his heart with renewed hope.

On sailed the galley. The voyagers passed Chiozzi, rounded the Lido, and, sweeping through the intricate channels (those safeguards of Venice), finally anchored in front of the proud arsenal of the Republic, over which was flauntingly distended the huge, waving, ensign of the Winged Lion of St. Mark.

Could the merchant, Alviano, look now,

after the lapse of nearly five hundred years, into that same, and still vast arsenal, which formerly could find work for more than three thousand men, and which contained more vessels of war within its boundaries than all the other European Powers put together—how would he have been amazed to see, only a few unfinished hulks, a solitary brigantine or two, the whole navy of a power that once dictated to the Roman Empire!

And how did Agnes feel on breathing the atmosphere of her native city? Once she had thought that Venice with its Palaces, canals, the square and piazza of St Mark, thronged by gay and gallant cavaliers in their sumptuous costumes was the work of enchantment or a fairy scene. But Agnes knew not then, that the prisons of Venice were too near her gayest palaces; she was ignorant that even the thoughtless, restless inhabitants seemed to shrink at times, as if some ill-omened spirit

hovered over them, and awed their turbulent spirits into gloom and fear.

What a revolution had taken place in the mind and feelings of Alviano's daughter as she swept up the grand canal! she beheld the same crowded waters—without pleasure. The once loved square of San Marco, caused her to shudder. Her eyes rested on the Ducal palace, and she thought of Paoli and of the decapitated Doge.

At length, the gondola stopped before the portals of the Palace Tiepolo; and in a very short time, Agnes was clasped with fond remembrance to the hearts of the Marchese's daughters.

Paulina, as she looked fondly in her cousin's face, did not at the first glance (for the delight of meeting her beloved cousins had recalled the colour to her cheek) perceive the ravages made in that fair and lovely face by sorrow—Paulina thought Agnes eminently beautiful;

even more so, than she herself had ever imagined.

In some of her letters to Paulina, Agnes had spoken of her intended nuptials with Paoli ; of her happiness, and the prospect before her of rambling through Italy with the chosen of her heart, till the sentence against Paoli should expire ! Paulina, had for an instant, felt sad, and an imperceptible sigh escaped her lips. But envy or jealousy had no resting place in the heart of the Venetian maiden, who soon banished from her thoughts all recollection of Paoli ; and when Agnes came, she was prepared to receive her, with all the fond affection to which their early companionship had given rise.

In the bosom of the kind and noble family of Tiepolo, Agnes, if she still pined in the secret solitude of her chamber, bore up, before her fond father and her relations, with apparent resignation.

The Marchese to whom Paoli was as dear almost as a son, heard with astonishment and grief of the mysterious disappearance of the Corsican. At times he almost imagined, he had been secretly entrapped by order of the Venetian government; for strange to say, notwithstanding his gallant exploits during the war, and the honest encomiums bestowed upon him by Admiral Pisani in his despatches, and all the interest exerted for him by the Marchese and other nobles of Venice—it was impossible to procure the revocation of his sentence.

Count Steno and his contessa had returned to Venice a few days before the arrival of Agnes and her father. Steno was distressed on hearing of Paolo's disappearance; but when the Marchese Tiepolo hinted at the possibility of his having been seized by order of the Venetian government for some secret reason of state, Count Steno declared it was utterly impossi-

ble. He allowed that Paoli had one enemy among the ten rulers of Venice, though from what cause he could not imagine; neither could he learn the name of that enemy. He also had been baffled in his attempts to procure a remission of Paoli's sentence.

CHAPTER IX.

ONE OF THE TEN RULERS.

WE must now request our readers to follow us from the mansion of the Marchese Tiepolo, into another palace in Venice, a few days after the arrival of the Signor Alviano. The saloon, into which we conduct our readers, was the grand reception-room of one of the noblest edifices in Venice, belonging to Count Luigi Passarini, lord of Cerego, and one of the Council of Ten.

It was night, and the saloon was brilliantly

lighted. The furniture, according to the times and the luxury and wealth of the Venetian nobles, was magnificent. Costly and rare mirrors—known only in Venice, where they were just then invented and manufactured—in frames, stupendous from the massive carving and gilding—velvet hangings, wrought in gold—silk and satin in profusion—pictures by famous artists—in fact, all that taste could plan, and wealth attain, was lavishly bestowed upon the decoration of that saloon and the four adjoining ones.

Through these superb chambers, on the night in question, moved all the rank and fashion of Venice. Music, dancing, and, above all, gambling, occupied the attention of the guests. In Venice, at this period, the spirit of gambling existed in greater force than in any other city in Europe. Enormous sums were staked, won, and lost nightly, in the saloons of the Venetian nobility. Males and females

equally indulged in that fatal and fascinating passion.

In the first and most gorgeous apartment, the chief occupation of the guests, was conversation. Some reposed on ottomans in groups, others stood in pairs; but all were occupied. Two signors stood somewhat apart from the rest, in earnest conversation. One of them was our old acquaintance, Count Michaello Steno; the other was the owner of the mansion, who was most elaborately and sumptuously dressed. In years, he appeared to be about fifty seven. He was of the middle height; but no way remarkable in figure. At a single glance, his features would be pronounced good; but a second look would convince the beholder that their expression was repulsive. Even in the midst of the many cringing parasites that surrounded him, there rested upon his features an air of scorn and pride. A restless expression also, at times,

sat upon his countenance, as if his mind and thoughts were far from the scene before him.

“You seem extremely anxious, Steno,” remarked Count Luigi, “about this Corsican exile; but I can positively assure you we have nothing whatever to do with his disappearance. Is it not much more likely that he has been entrapped into the power of Genoa? Their rulers would willingly pay a large sum for his person. But you were saying he was about to be united to the daughter of one of our wealthiest merchants, the Signor ——”

Passarini hesitated; and had Count Steno raised his head at that moment, he would have perceived a strange expression on the Venetian’s countenance.

“The Signor Alviano’s daughter,” interposed Steno; “yes, it was a sad fatality, in sooth, a cruel blow to one so young and fair.”

A gleam of satisfaction stole across the

features of Count Luigi; but he immediately replied—

“By St. Mark, Steno, you seem to think a girl’s heart, once bestowed, is not to be recovered. But let her mingle among our young and gay cavaliers, and I will bet you her weight in silver, she finds another heart to give away.”

“I am no gambler Count,” responded Steno, somewhat coldly, or I would double the bet with you. Agnes Alviano is ——”

“Save yourself a long and moral piece of eloquence upon this peerless maiden,” interrupted Passarini, with a sarcastic laugh; “for I hear she is beautiful. And tell me, has not her father purchased the Palace of Count Nicolo Pisani, who so unfortunately perished in the East?”

“He has, and moved into it, yesterday.”

“The Signor Alviano! how looks he after twenty years spent under the burning sun of Byzantium? Bears he his years well, eh?”

Steno was looking at the councillor as he asked the latter question; and he somehow thought there was a strange expression in the keen eyes of the questioner.

"I believe," said Steno, not answering the question put, "you were never acquainted with the Signor Alviano."

"No; I never had the pleasure of meeting the Signor Alviano," returned Count Luigi, speaking slowly and deliberately. "He had sailed for the East before my return to Venice. But, Count," continued Passarini, "there is one thing I particularly wish to say to you, as I may not again to-night have the opportunity. You must use your influence with the Signor Alviano. You are aware of our system."

The councillor here spoke in a whisper.

"I shall send a secretary to the Signor, who requires one in winding up his mercantile affairs. He shall be a person fully competent. Persuade the merchant to install him in that

office ; otherwise, you know, we must establish a person in his household, of a more objectionable character."

"Who is the man you speak of Count?" demanded Steno, after a moment's pause.

"A very quiet, sensible, elderly man," carelessly returned the Venetian. "He served me several years ago ; and I had no fault to find with him. I do not think you ever saw him. His name is Tomaso Moncenego."

"Very well," returned, Steno, turning away. - "But verily," and he muttered the last words between his teeth, "ours is a monstrous system. I begin, since my marriage, to lose all my ambitious speculations."

And Steno turned away.

Count Luigi Passarini, stood looking after Count Steno, with a look of singular meaning.

"Ours is a monstrous system, eh ? he repeated to himself. "*Benissimo !*"

With a bitter and suppressed laugh, he strolled into one of the gambling saloons ; and there, in less than an hour, threw away a sum that would have made ten miserable families happy for many a long day.

Time rolls on, whether spent in pleasure or in pain ; and gay and happy as the guests in the Palace Passarini, appeared to be, at a late hour of the night, or rather morning, not a soul, save the Count himself, remained within those splendid saloons.

The councillor stood with folded arms, gazing steadily into a magnificent mirror, which reached from floor to ceiling. The brilliant lights reflected his figure and features, in strong relief. He looked keenly, and even anxiously at his own reflection ; he seemed to scan every feature, and his cold grey eyes, after a time, threw out a momentary gleam of satisfaction, as he muttered to himself—

“Yes, I am changed. Thirty years have

done their work ; ay, much more than their allotted work. I am an old man to look at ; but, here," and he placed his hand upon his heart, "I am young. The fire is here, still, burning as fierce as if thirty years, were only as yesterday. The hour so patiently waited for is come at last."

Touching a silver bell, a domestic entered.

"Tell Tomaso Moncenego, to come hither."

In a few moments, the door opened, as if stealthily, and a man, habited in black, entered, with the noiseless step of a well-bred cat, and with something of the manner of that cringing-animal.

"Close the door," said the Count.

It was done.

"Now stand up and let me have a clear view of you, Mussato—or rather—for I forget myself—Tomaso Moncenego."

The man obeyed ; he was a tall, meagre figure, though not without an appearance of

great muscular power. He had a cold and passionless face, with dull, leaden-coloured eyes. It might seem that his countenance could be little altered by expression; yet that was far from the case.

"Stand a little more from under that shining light Tomaso. Let me see if the thirty years gone by have altered you, so that even the mother that gave thee birth, should doubt thy identity."

And the Count scanned earnestly the features and figure of the man who stood before him like a statue.

"Yes, you will do," said the Venetian. "The fire of that eye is gone—quenched. Ha," continued the Count, "who could have imagined that cold, leaden eye could answer me so well? Hatred and revenge are still, I see, to be read in their glance. So much the better, so much the better. I wronged you, Mussato. Prosperity and twenty years of re-

pose have not extinguished that, which should never cease to burn with a devouring flame."

"My Lord, I have that here ;" and the stranger laid his hand upon his left shoulder, "which hourly reminds me of an oath, never for a moment forgotten. Now is the time. Are your plans matured, my Lord ? Or shall this ;" and his hand rested on the handle of a poniard ——"

"*Cospetto*, man, that would be poor vengeance, after the lapse of so many years. If loss of life could have satisfied my burning thirst for revenge, my never dying hatred, twenty years ago, Bartholomeo Alviano, would have been food for worms. No, no, no ! Listen to me now, Mussatto, and attend well to my instructions. Bartolomeo Alviano, can never recognise, in the Count Luigi Passarini, Lord of the rich land of Cerego, member of the Council of Ten—eh, Mussato,

does that name make even you start? In truth, it is a mighty power; it crushes the innocent, as well as the guilty; the prince no less than the beggar. A modern Colossus, more mighty and destructive than the iron sceptre of a Nero or a Caligula. But I was saying, I fear not to be recognized. Even should we meet, he could never expect to see in me, the condemned, the outlawed, the fugitive."

The Count paused; his face flushed, and his whole manner was excited, by his thoughts.

"Why," he continued, after striding across the saloon, and again stopping and fixing his gaze upon the unmoved countenance of his spy, "why does my memory thus for ever conjure up the scenes of long past years! Power, wealth, dominion, all are mine; yet all these cannot drive from my mind the cursed remembrance of the past, which haunts me, sleeping

or waking. Give me a goblet of wine, Mussato."

The Count threw himself into a chair, swallowed the wine, and, after a moment, spoke in a much less excited tone.

"Our victim," resumed he, "is at length within our power, after long years of patient waiting. All I ever feared was that death might remove him from my grasp. But no: he is here, in Venice, full of health; possessing immense wealth, proud of a beauteous daughter, for whose hand half our young nobility already eagerly offer themselves. He lent large sums, too, to replenish our exhausted coffers; and we propose to ennoble this unknown outcast, for no one can discover whence he came. Baron Alviano! ha! ha! ha!" laughed the Venetian, "an empty title, and a cheap return for his ostentatious liberality. Now, Mussato, what think you? Would it not be a glorious revenge to strip him of his

wealth, to rob him of his daughter, to banish him, as a condemned outlaw, from the territories of Venice for ever ; and then to whisper in the ears of this heart-stricken old man— penniless, childless, disgraced, stigmatised, ‘ Andrea Passarini, has thus repaid himself for the past.’ ”

“ Yes, my lord,” answered the spy, seeing the Count pause. That would be a revenge worthy of your excellency. But I claim the person of the Merchant Alviano when banished from Venice. My account is to be balanced yet.”

Again the eye of the villain changed the entire expression of his apparently inanimate features ; for it actually glistened like the eye of the rattle snake.

“ Do as thou wilt, Mussato. He is thine when I am satisfied. Now, then, for the part you have to play at this moment. Alviano is at present in his own mansion. Take this letter ;

and, the day after to-morrow, present yourself at the palace Pisani, or rather Alviano—for he has purchased it—when you will be appointed his secretary. I know your skill in counterfeiting any writing. That is one of the levers I intend to use. Let me see you once in every twenty-four hours, no matter what hour of the night. But it *must be* at night. This key, you know, admits you to the private staircase, leading to my sleeping chamber. Knock twice; and I will admit you. Remember, only in the last hours of the night. Circumstances unlooked for have already favoured me. The disappearance of this Corsican Paoli, who was banished Venice, has given me a most powerful engine to work with. Have your eyes constantly about you; let nothing escape you that passes within the boundaries of Alviano's mansion. I have said enough for the present. You may therefore retire. When installed as secretary, let me see you."

Mussato bowed ; and, without a word, left the saloon. The Count summoned his attendants : the lights were extinguished, and the Count retired to his chamber.

Not, surely, to sleep ; but with the thoughts of a fiend raging in his heart's core.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAPTURE.

How frequently, when we think ourselves on the point of obtaining the object of our dearest wishes, suddenly, by some unforeseen event, the object is lost, and the heart is crushed by the overwhelming calamities that follow. Vain, indeed, are all our resolutions when opposed to the decrees, not of destiny, but of One who alone knows why or wherefore we are thus crushed, when believing ourselves most sure of felicity. So it was with Giacinto

Paoli, who, with a light and happy heart, his thoughts full of the felicity before him, entered the light barge with six active oarsmen, to proceed to Scutari, and execute the commission of the Signor Alviano. It is scarcely three miles to Scutari beyond the point from which he started. The day was cold, bleak, and wintry ! and the scud flew along the opposite line of coast, with great velocity, while a biting wind howled over the narrow waters of the Bosphorus.

Favoured by the breeze that blew off the shores of Byzantium, the barge, in much less than an hour, touched the beach at Scutari ; and the Corsican proceeded at once to the house of the Signor Negreti, leaving Pulini to amuse himself with strolling through the place. Two hours finished all that Paoli had to do with the Greek Merchant. Notwithstanding the pressing arguments of the latter to defer his return till the next day—for the gale had

increased to a tempest—Paoli only smiled, saying—

“ ’Tis but crossing a canal.”

The Greek shook his head, and replied—

“ Nevertheless, the passage is a dangerous one in gales of wind.”

Shaking the merchant by the hand, Giacinto proceeded to the pier, where he had left the barge; and, in the way, he met his squire, who observed that it blew a hurricane, and he doubted the possibility of the men pulling against such a head-wind.

“ I have vowed,” responded Paoli, “ never to sleep under any other roof than that which covers my betrothed, if possible.”

“ St. Antony, we can but try,” returned the stout-hearted squire, cheerfully. “ We can pull a better oar than any of those rascally Greeks.”

Since the flight of the Grecian galleys at the battle of the Bosphorus, Pulini held the Greeks in sovereign contempt.

On reaching the Mole, the Knight perceived that the wind blew in downright earnest. The water was driven off the surface like snowdrift ; and the short, curling seas broke with noisy violence against the strong Mole of Scutari. It was yet early in the day ; and Paoli, after casting a glance over the troubled waters, and the equally troubled sky, saw that to pull across was out of the question. But the barge was a fine boat ; and, ordering the men to step the masts, and reef the sails, the wind having veered a point or two up the channel of the Bosphorus, he saw no great risk in making the opposite shore, a league or so below Pera. He could then easily reach Byzantium before night by crossing the ferry above Dolma Brachia.

It was not without evident reluctance that the Greek sailors obeyed. Proverbially timid, then, as well as now, nothing but the known determination of the Corsican could have induced them to dream of crossing the straits in

such a gale. If anything will make a Greek incur a serious risk 'tis a bribe.

"Come, my men," said Paoli, taking the helm, "be alert, and there is a well-filled purse to divide amongst you."

Gold, gold, what will it not do ! The sails were close-reefed ; the sheets held steadily with one turn over the hook ; and, rounding the Mole, the light, but buoyant boat, breasted, with some chance of success, the wild waves of the Thracian Bosphorus. A cheer broke from the hitherto silent lips of the numerous Greeks that thronged the Mole to witness, as they firmly believed, the upsetting of the barge. But when the boat, skilfully handled, threw the white crest of the waves high over gun-wale and mast, and steered a point or so off the wind, gliding rapidly and safely from the shore a shout of approbation broke from the crowd.

On flew the barge, her masts and yards bending like reeds, and the sea flying over them in one continued sheet, while the as-

tounded Greeks alternately called on their favourite saints, or implored the Corsican to turn back. Paoli had no time to heed either their prayers or solicitations; for, blinded by the spray, it was as much as he could do to keep the masts and sails from being torn out of the barge by the fierce and sudden gusts. The Corsican, however, succeeded in running the boat into a snug inlet some three miles below Pera.

"By the mass, Signor," exclaimed Pulini, as he leaped ashore, and shook himself clear of as much water as possible, "if this is a hot climate in summer, it beats our own island to nothing in the cold of winter."

"A smart walk will set our blood in circulation, Pulini," returned the Knight, as he extricated his weighty sword from a locker in which he had placed it to keep it from the wet.

The men anchored their boat, and said they

would sleep either in her, or a village close at hand, and return to Byzantium in the morning.

The Knight and his squire having inquired and received full instructions as to their path over the hill from where the remainder of their route would be distinctly visible, set out at a rapid pace; for their wet garments and the biting wind gave an impetus to their movements. As they proceeded across the hill, Paoli was struck by the beauty and richness of the land, even as seen in the depth of winter, and on a gloomy day.

"What a pity, Signor," observed Pulini, "that this fine country should belong to such a cowardly and effeminate race as the Greeks!"

"It's not at all unlikely," responded the Corsican, but that the land will change masters. The followers of the false prophet are making gigantic strides towards this last strong hold of the Roman Empire."

"The saints forbid, Signor," piously ejacu-

lated Pulini, "that these accursed revilers of the true faith should plant the crescent where the blessed cross now stands!"

"Amen!" seriously responded Paoli. "Petrarch, in his late letter to the Doge of Venice, says. 'Unite with Genoa; and with fire and sword root out the perfidious Greek, and the vile heresy that creeps over that fair land.' But we may as well attempt to make the lion embrace the lamb, as those two greedy, perfidious republics unite for other purposes than the thirst of gold."

A fast walk of an hour brought our two Corsicans to the gates of Pera. The keen wind had dried their garments; and the rapid walk freely circulated their blood.

"It strikes me, Signor, if we could have found a path over yonder hill, it would have been better than passing through this colony of our old enemies."

"I see no reason for any such precautions," replied our hero. "There are several days

yet, or rather weeks, to the expiration of the allotted term. The Genoese, Catalans, and Venetians mingle amicably in the bazaars and magazines of Byzantium and Pera."

"*Per Bacco*, Signor, we are neither Greek, Catalan, nor Venetian."

"Who is to know that, Pulini?" So saying, the Knight and his squire passed through the gate of Pera, and entered that imposing and fast increasing settlement of the Genoese. All the public places of this busy colony were thronged with traders from every port of the east and west than known. Knights in full mail—groups of soldiers and men at arms, intended for their settlements in the Black Sea—Greeks, Armenians, Persians, in their native costume—crowded and jostled through the streets and covered bazaars which were filled with costly merchandise of every kind, and frequented by females, old and young, in their favorite head-dress (a long white veil over the head, and parted in the front.) Altogether, though

within an arrow's flight of Byzantium, the scene, presented in Pera, was totally different from anything that could meet the sight in the great city."

Traversing the great Square, in which stood the strong fortress of the Governor, Paoli, passed a group of loiterers, of whom some were in very handsome mail, and others richly habited in the Spanish costume, then much imitated by the Genoese. The powerful and striking figure of the Corsican attracted their attention; and Paulini, full of suspicion, watched their motions as they looked eagerly after his master. The squire even caught the words, "Commander of the Lion," spoken aloud by one of the group as if in reply to a question.

"We are recognised, Signor," said Pulini, as he rapidly followed his master. "I heard one of those Genoese in the chain-armour, say you were the commander of The Lion."

"That's very possible, Pulini," returned

our hero ; but no consequence can result from their recognising us. They would now forfeit their honour by infringing the terms of the treaty."

"Forfeit their honour ! *Cospetto*, Signor, when had a Genoese faith or honour to lose ? What says the proverb ?—' Men without faith—sea without fish—and women without shame.' "

Paoli laughed at the bitterness of his honest squire against their old enemies, and quickened his steps to please him. On reaching the gate on the side nearest Byzantium, Paoli demanded of the warder, who threw open the small wicket leading out on the draw-bridge, the nearest road to the Ferry.

"Have you come through the town, Signor ?" demanded the warder ; "for if you have, you have increased your distance from the Ferry by more than a mile. There is another gate which leads out in a direct line. However, you must take the path round yonder fort,"

pointing to one about a quarter of a mile distant on the side of a steep hill. As the other side of that fort is a gate, called the east gate. When you passed through the great square, you might have reached that by a path not five hundred yards long."

Thanking the warder, Paoli and his squire proceeded along the path which led through a small, but beautiful, valley, now termed Dolma Bactia. Tradition states that through this valley the Turks drew their vessels in one night into the harbour of Byzantium, being unable to force the chain which defended its entrance. Paoli and his squire soon passed across the valley, and were ascending the hill to the fort, when Pulini, looking back, descried a body of armed men proceeding along the very path they had passed.

"By all the saints, Signor, we are pursued!" exclaimed the squire, anxiously. "Let us pass on."

Paoli looked, and saw the men following, certainly, but at a very easy pace.

"They may only be proceeding to some of the forts," suggested he; "perhaps to this very one."

Our hero and Pulini were then beneath the walls of the fort; the path turned sharp round it; and the moment the Knight and his squire did so, they at once perceived they were betrayed. A score of men-at-arms, with their leader in full mail, his visor closed, were drawn directly across, and completely blocking up the road.

"Curse on their faith and honor!" bitterly exclaimed Pulini, drawing his sword. "Better, my lord, to die than rot in their dungeons, or hang on their gibbets, as your noble sire was doomed to do."

Paoli uttered not a word, but biting his lip with passion, till the blood flowed, he drew his heavy steel cutlass, and, advancing with a firm step, said, in a bold and fierce tone—

"For what reason, Signor, is our path obstructed in a time of peace, and in face of a proclaimed armistice?"

"I am a mere mercenary, Signor," replied the Commander of the men-at-arms, "and am paid for obeying orders. My present duty is to place you, Signor Paoli, a prisoner in this fort; and you surely are not so insane as to resist the force before you, and a stronger one coming up behind you. Be wise, then, Signor; give up your sword, and no insult or violence shall be offered you."

"It has never been the custom of a Paoli to surrender his weapon to an enemy; especially to a perfidious one. Take it if you can."

Boiling with rage, and perfectly reckless of life (for once in the power of Genoa, he well knew if life should not at once be forfeited, liberty was gone for ever), had Paoli and his squire been cased in mail, many of the men-at-arms would have dearly rued the strife. As it was, placing their backs against the high wall

of the fort, they defied every effort of the men to take them. Their Commander, desperately wounded by a blow from the Corsican, lay senseless upon the bank ; and so amazed at the strength and skill of Paoli were the Italians—for the men formed part of a troop of Condottieri from the Milanese in the pay of Genoa—that they hung back, till a shout from the band advancing up the hill roused them to greater exertion.

“Now then, my brave squire,” exclaimed Paoli, “cut through these dastards, and on for the ferry. Once in sight of any part of the suburb of Byzantium, these villains dare not infringe the treaty.”

Again, a man-at arms was struck down mortally wounded—another—and Paoli broke through the rank easily ; when a voice from the walls of the fort above, exclaimed—

“Stand back, men !—A quarry from a cross-bow will cool that incarnate devil.”

“Twang went the steel-bow—and the ill-starred Corsican staggered, for the bolt had

lodged in his left side. His arm fell, from the agony of the wound, and two of the men rushed eagerly upon him. Rousing his last energies (for he thought himself mortally wounded), with a grasp of iron he seized the ill-fated Italian, and, lifting him from the ground, hurled him over the steep precipice on one side of the path. But the next instant he fell prostrate and senseless upon the sod.

With a wild cry of agony, Pulini cast himself beside his beloved master. The men-at-arms, and those coming up the hill, stood aghast as they beheld their comrade hurled over the steep, and saw and heard his mailed body as it rolled and clanked against the sharp rocks that formed the cliff. The leader of the men had contrived to unclasp his helmet, and sat upright, with blood-stained features, gazing, bewildered, upon the scene of the late strife.

"Is the Knight dead, Pietro?" he demanded, in a weak, but anxious voice. "'Fore God, he is the best man I ever yet saw handle a sword.

I bear him no malice, though, *cospetto*, he has left an ugly mark on my skull, despite my Milan steel. —Holy Paul! had he been in knightly harness, and that stout squire of his in good mail, we should have rued this day's job. But is he dead?"

"I wish he had died twenty years ago," replied one of the men. "Curse him! he has slain, outright, my brother Nicolo. His squire, there, is handling him as gently as a nurse would a bantling. What's to be done now?"

In the mean time, the men, with a leader whose armour betokened higher rank than the other, and whose great height and bulk caused him to ascend the steep path slowly and painfully, reached the spot. The leader's visor was down; and, after puffing and blowing for a moment or so, he said, speaking to the Milanese—

"Why, how the devil is this, Master Matteo? Here has been some pretty fighting. Four of you looking as dead as pickled tunney; some half dozen of you examining your wounds;

and one gone exploring over the cliff, which he never will ascend again. And, *Santa Madonna!* worse than all, the Corsican is dead, I fear."

He then approached the place where the distracted Pulini was staunching the wound in the side of his master, as well as he could with the means at hand.

"Why, curse it! How is this?" angrily exclaimed the bulky commander, who was no other than Achilles Furiani. "He has been struck down by a bolt from a cross-bow. What dastard did this?"

"I did it," exclaimed a tall, strong man in the dress of a crossbow-man. "I did it, by order of one, more my master than you, Signor Furiani. He would have slain half those fellows," he added, "ay, and escaped, before you could have mounted this hill; and the Commander of Galata, who was beside me on yonder wall, told me to shoot, if I shot him dead."

"Humph!" muttered Achilles; "like him—cursed cowardly way of bringing down a brave man, fighting against fifteen of you, and unarmed, too. However, what's done, can't be undone. Pick him up, and carry him to the chamber intended for his prison. Send for the leech. If he's dead, why there no help for it. If he lives, which I trust he will, though, perhaps, it is only to be hung as a rebel in the end, I shall have done all I can do on the score of humanity, to a brave man. Now," added Achilles, speaking to himself, "let me see what Campaldino says for his share in this transaction."

In a chamber of the fort Furiani found Campaldino, pacing backward and forward in an agitated manner.

"So he is dead!" he exclaimed, as soon as he beheld Achilles.

"He may, or he may not," returned the Lieutenant; "the surgeon will decide that. He is hit deuced hard; and a cursed shame

it was, to bring down a brave knight with a cross-bow, like a mad dog !”

“ Why, what ails the man ?” exclaimed Campaldino, with a scornful laugh. “ Since when has your conscience pricked you so hard ? When Paoli was left to the mercy of Montoni’s dagger, you never troubled your head about how he was struck down. And now, when on the very point of escaping, and after actually slaying three or four of our men-at-arms, you want to quarrel with me for bringing him down with an honest bow-shot.”

“ Oh ! to the devil with such honest shots, say I. By the mass, it’s no joke, an ounce of iron sent into you at ten paces. I never saw the man before, and therefore did not bestow a thought upon him. But, *corpo di mondo !* a finer looking fellow cannot exist. Then, just to see him make play, without defensive armour of any kind, against a whole score of men-at-arms ; and, even when shot to death, take up that unlucky devil, Spolato, and pitch

him like a lobster over the cliff. Fore God, it warms one's heart towards such a man."

A boisterous laugh of contempt was all the answer Campaldino deigned to give.

"Well, you may laugh, Andrea ; but it won't alter the case one way or another. Dead or alive, he now belongs to the governor of Pera ; so I suppose all we shall pocket by the transaction, is the disgrace of not being able to take a Knight and his squire with a score of men-at-arms, without getting a scurvy rascal of a bow-man to shoot him."

"You are enough to drive one mad with your cursed nonsense, Furiani. What else was to be done ? How else was he to be taken ? When I saw him pass through the square, and felt him, too, in the battle of the Bosphorus, I was forced to let the governor know, claiming half the reward, however. The Governor, who has less scruple, even, than ourselves, was intensely anxious to secure his person ; for you must know, he is the

very man Paoli's father drove out of Corsica, and stripped of all his hard-earned treasure, plundered from the Corsican lords. I was told to take a score of men-at-arms, and go out by the east gate, and cut him off before he could possibly be seen by the Greeks on the opposite side, so that the capture might be kept secret. I told you to hurry after him with four of our men and secure him before he could reach the Fort; and then I would have told the Governor he had crossed by a boat from Galata. But you are so cursed slow in your movements, that he reached the Fort before you; and the taking of him being entrusted by the governor, to that Italian mercenary, I did not interfere till I saw that he actually would have cut his way through the men, and got away. It was not likely, then, that I would let the man, that slew my father and struck my eye out, escape when a bowman stood at my elbow."

“And, what does the governor intend doing with him, supposing he should live?”

“Send him by the next fleet that arrives, to Genoa, where he will linger out the residue of his days in a state prison. Why, man, it was a most cursed chance our not capturing him without the Governor’s knowledge. His value is doubled since the late news from Genoa.”

“*Diavolo!* And what news is that?” demanded Achilles.”

“I had not time to inform you,” returned Andrea Campaldino; “for the despatches only reached the Governor a few hours before the Corsican happened to pass through the square. It appears, by these despatches, that Corsica has again revolted; and, singular to say, General Paoli who, it was believed, had been executed by my father, and for which supposed deed he incurred the vengeance of the younger Paoli—”

Campaldino did not finish his sentence, for

Furiani, who stared with amazement at his comrade, exclaimed—

“What are you talking about? I can’t understand these plots and counter-plots. Who, the devil, is General Paoli? I always understood your respectable and much regretted father, when he got possession of Corte, hung a General Paoli, with several other Signors. And now you tell me—he’s alive. Did he hang General Paoli?”

“No!” sulkily returned Campaldino, “he did not. I confess I thought at the time my father’s policy was a crooked one. He caused it to be understood that he executed General Paoli and others; thinking to strike a terrible blow to the rebels, and end the war, which it certainly did, and cost him his life. The other Signors *were* executed; and one was dressed purposely, in the armour of the General. But, in reality, the Corsican leader was sent secretly to Genoa and confined in the State Prison, to be used hereafter, if necessary, to intimidate

the Corsicans. But, lo and behold, when wanting, it was discovered he had, by some unaccountable means, escaped. Now, no doubt, he will contrive to make his way to Corsica; and, in the present state of the republic, on the point of a fresh war with Venice, and a rupture with France, the Corsicans will have the best of it.

“Well, by the immortal Gods, Andrea,” exclaimed Furiani, “you have completely bewildered me; especially as we are talking without a flask of wine to make what you are saying intelligible. All I can make out is, that General Paoli was dead, but is now alive; was thought to be hung, and was not hung; that his son was alive an hour ago, but is now either dead or likely to die; and that, if he lives, he is likely to be hung; and if not hung, is likely to die in prison. Now, if that’s not what our leech calls a compound mixture, I do not know what is. But let us go down to the old tower, and pass the remainder of the

evening brightning our ideas with Cyprus, and hearing what that rascal, Montoni, says. He has bought the craft, you say, and the sooner we get out of this place the better. We have nothing further to do with the poor *diavolo* in the chamber above; as you passed him over to the Governor. Pray shall you finger any cash for betraying him into his power?"

"He has promised me half the sum he gets, on his reaching Genoa," replied the commander of Galata.

"Ha! *promised*," muttered Achilles, "they are easily managed, those promises, by the mass! Had I lived all my life on promises, by St. Antony, I should'nt have so goodly a carcase to boast of now."

"If you had less carcase, and more brains, *amico*," returned Campaldino, "we had entrapped that Corsican ourselves. You took as much time to mount that cursed hill, as would take another man a league of ground."

"As if it was nothing," muttered Furiani,

“for a man of my bulk, cased in mail, after making a hearty dinner, and finishing half-a-dozen goodly flasks, to mount a hill as perpendicular, by Jove, as the ramparts of Pera ! But here’s your man, Nicolo.”

“How is the prisoner now ? Is he dead ?” demanded Campaldino, of the man who entered the room.

“No, Signor,” replied the man, “neither is he likely to die. The leech who has taken out the bolt, says he’ll be nothing the worse in a month’s time. He’s quite sensible now. Matteo has got an ugly knock over the head. He says the Corsican hits cursed hard ; for his Milan steel casque, is sliced like a gourd ; and, as to the other men, it’s frightful to look at the way they’re carved.”

“*Corpo di mondo !*” ejaculated Furiani ; “and yet you wanted me to pursue him with the four men I had with me, without waiting to go back to the tower for my armour.”

“It’s no use talking now,” interposed Cam-

paldino. "Let us go ; I wish to see Montoni as soon as possible. Perhaps his brain is more fertile. We might contrive to get him into our power yet."

"To the devil with plots, say I," grumbled Achilles, as he followed his commander.

Leaving the fort, the two confederates took their way to the tower of Galata.

CHAPTER XL.

RETROSPECTION.

WE must now request our readers to pass, with us, over the space of two years from the period of Paoli's captivity.

The time was near sun-set ; and the spot to which we beg our readers to follow us, is Puelfo, a very insignificant village on the borders of the Adriatic, and not more than a league from Chiozzi : it was, however, without the Dogada.

Two travellers, well mounted, one a tall

powerful individual, in a plain, but polished suit of mail—the other a stout, broad-shouldered man of middle age, and habited in the armour of a squire.

These travellers were no other than Giacinto Paoli, and his attendant, Pulini. The road to the village—if the stony beach could be called a road—ran along the then smooth waters of the Adriatic. The hamlet itself possessed but one venta of any kind, and that a remarkably poor one; but the place was selected by our hero for two reasons: first, it was without the Dogada of Venice; for Paoli's term of exile from that Republic still wanted four months of terminating; and he by no means felt inclined to trust that jealous republic, even if it wanted but four days. The second reason why he selected the village of Puelfo for a resting-place after a very long and hazardous journey, was that he could dispatch a messenger from thence, who could go and return the same day.

Having reached the door of the venta, he was assured by the astonished padrone, who certainly had never been visited by such guests before, that he could afford the horses the best of shelter (which meant that they might sleep under the shelter of a hedge in the one field he possessed) and that, as to themselves, they had only to ask and to have. Paoli, was therefore installed in a small but very clean chamber, and the repast provided for him, was fish, and fish only. But our hero and his squire were not men who troubled themselves as to the splendour of their lodgings or the fare put before them.

Having satisfied a very good appetite with the spoils of the sea, under their windows, and washed it down with a bottle or two of very passable wine, Paoli sent for the *padrone de casa*; and, on that individual making his appearance, he requested him to procure an intelligent man, to send to Venice with letters, in the earliest hour possible in the morning.

Pulini himself, would have gone ; but for several reasons, they both thought it better to employ a stranger.

"You could not, Signor," responded the padrone, "have applied for a messenger at a more fortunate moment. My son, Pietro, who is, (though I ought not to praise my own flesh and blood) as clever a youth as any within ten leagues of this," (in which distance the worthy landlord took in the whole Dogada). "He sails at sun-rise to-morrow, Signor, with a cargo of fish to Venice," continued the host ; "and please the blessed Saints, will be back before sun-set—as he knows the navigation of the lagunes and of the channel of Chiozzi. He gets there and back in all weathers."

"That will answer exactly," returned our hero. "Send your son to me ; he shall be well paid. Attention to my messages will give more profit than his cargo of fish."

Paoli was pleased with the appearance and

manner of the youth—a fine, hardy, open-featured young man. Giving him a packet of letters prepared at the last town he had slept at, and carefully inclosed in a strong leather case, he told him that the packet was to be delivered at the mansion of the Marchese Tiepolo. Paoli also gave Pietro a single letter to be left at the mansion of Count Michaello Steno. In both cases Pietro was to wait for an answer, even if he should be detained till the following day. To these instructions, our hero added the gift of a handful of silver to pay expenses.

The youth, rejoiced at being employed by so handsome and generous a Signor, had not patience to wait the rising-sun, but put to sea with his two comrades an hour before dawn.

While Pietro Anino, is making the best of his way through the intricate channel of Chiozzi, we will very briefly fill up the

gap left in our tale by the passing of two years.

The incidents which occurred to our hero during those two years, were of the most eventful kind, and his trials severe. At the expiration of three months after his capture by order of the Governor of Pera, he recovered from the dangerous wound he had received ; but it was not, till half a year had been endured by him in hopeless captivity, that he was unexpectedly embarked in a war galley bound to Genoa, with a large body of troops returning from a Genoese settlement in the Black sea. Violent and boisterous weather detained this vessel two months in the Archipelago. Again, off the coast of Sicily, a furious gale drove the voyagers out of their course ; and as the galley was finally dismasted and helpless, the soldiers mutinied, broke open the stores, and in the confusion which ensued the vessel was driven by the raging tempest

upon the most dangerous part of the coast of the Island of Sardinia—

In the terror of their approaching destruction, Paoli and his squire forced their way on deck scarcely half an hour before the vessel struck on a reef about five hundred yards from the main land. Both of them, being bold and powerful swimmers from their childhood, cast off their upper garments and threw themselves without hesitation into the boiling surf—that raged round the barque, every sea that swept over her deck, threatening to dash her into countless pieces.

Maddened by wine and terror, scarcely a soul reached the shore alive out of two hundred; but Paoli and his squire, watching their opportunity, and exerting their utmost powers, though severely bruized and cut, succeeded in landing on a range of flat rock; and finally clambered out of reach of the devouring waves, that lashed and foamed over that iron-bound coast.

After this most providential and unlooked-for escape from bondage, Paoli and his companion made their way to Detrano, the nearest town to that part of the coast where the galley was wrecked. They were in a distressing dilemma, having neither garments, money, nor any article of value. But no sooner were the inhabitants of Detrano aware that they were Corsicans then they conducted them to the mansion of their pastor, who received them with the greatest kindness; and on learning the name of his guest, redoubled his offers of assistance. "For," said he, "you are not perhaps aware that your gallant countrymen, under Counts Gaffieri, Sampiero, and other seigneurs of name and station, are carrying on a vigorous war against the Genoese; and from the last reports, I learn that they have taken Bonifaccio, Ajaccio, and several other fortified places of note."

Paoli was electrified, and Pulini half frantic

with joy. Ardently as our hero longed to proceed to Venice to recover his betrothed, his beloved country occupied his first thoughts; and he embarked the very next day in a fishing boat. Passing through the numerous islands that lie scattered amid the narrow strait that divides the two islands, he reached Bonifaccio in safety. The town was strongly garrisoned, under the command of an officer who knew Paoli well.

The intelligence of his return spread over the town, and adjacent country like wild fire. Hundreds that had before hesitated, flew to arms. "Paoli, the deliverer, is come!" shouted they. At the expiration of ten days from his arrival, he left Bonifaccio at the head of eight hundred well-armed men to join the Count Sampiero who was besieging his native fortress and town of La Rocca.

The amazement and joy of the young Count was great when he beheld his lost friend at

the head of the party advancing to his relief. La Rocca was stormed, and taken the following day ; and the news of Paoli's return, still flying through the country, had an electrifying effect. Every hour brought in parties of men, indifferently armed, it is true, but enthusiastic in the cause they were prepared to fight and die for."

After a week's delay, Paoli, at the head of a considerable force, advanced against Bona, one of the largest arsenals for arms which the Genoese possessed. This fortress, after a desperate and sanguinary struggle, surrendered. Messengers shortly after arrived, and brought the intelligence that the Count Gaffieri was advancing to meet and join forces with Paoli, in order to lay siege to Corte, the strongest fortress, and the capital town of the island.

Paoli received the old and beloved friend of his father with a warm and filial embrace, at once tendering him the command of their united forces.

"No, no," exclaimed Gaffieri, with tears in his eyes, in memory of his lost friend, "under a Paoli I fought for years, and no other, while one of that noble name remains, shall lead the sons of Corsica to freedom."

And well did our hero sustain the honor conferred upon him. Success attended him everywhere. Corte fell, after a month's siege. Then all the forts on the east coast were surrendered into his hands; and after three months more of desperate struggle, the cities of Bastia, San Fiorenzo, and Ajaccio (which had been retaken), alone remained to the Genoese.

Paoli was advancing upon Bastia, when intelligence reached him by a carrick which put into the port of Mariana, that the great Genoese fleet under Grimaldi had sustained a most ruinous defeat, off Locria in Sardinia, from the Venetian fleet, led by Pisani; and that Grimaldi had returned to Genoa where the greatest consternation prevailed.

This was inspiring intelligence for the sons of Freedom ; while, to the garrison of Bastia, it was a death-blow ; for they had looked to the fleet of Grimaldi, for reinforcements after he should have beaten the Venetians.

Paoli next invested Bastia, when, one morning, Pulini rushed into his tent, one deprived of his senses. During several moments, he was unable to utter a syllable. At length, the words burst from his lips—

“ Your father is alive ! ”

Paoli sprang upon his feet, and the blood rushed to his face and temples, as he grasped the arms of his squire with a force that brought tears to his eyes.

“ True, Signor, as I live ! ” gasped the squire. “ The man is without who brought the intelligence. St. Antonio ! what a grasp you took of my arm ! The General landed four days ago in the Gulph of San Fiorenzo. All I can learn of the man is that he saw him land from a small tartana—heard the crowd that

soon assembled around him rend the air with shouts of "Paoli, our chief, for ever!" Wishing to be the very first to carry the intelligence, the man started on the instant, travelled all the night, and reached the camp this moment."

Paoli hardly breathed; his heart beat violently; joy overpowered him.

"Take this purse to the man, and tell him, for the news he has brought me, if the Almighty continues to prosper our cause, and our country becomes free, twenty of the best acres on the lands of Paoli are his for ever. Now hasten, Pulini, and get a couple of our stout horses. I will start this instant for San Fiorenzo."

We need not describe the meeting of a father and son so devotedly attached; nor will we pause at this period of our tale, to relate the extraordinary circumstances that caused a belief that the General had been executed by the Genoese Commander, Campaldino; nor his adventures in escaping from the prisons of Genoa.

In six months from that period, not a Genoese remained in Corsica. The whole island was one scene of wild enthusiasm.

Leaving his father (after relating to him the whole of his adventures, and his betrothment to the Signor Alviano's daughter), to regulate the future government of Corsica, and to recall those influential seigneurs who had exiled themselves, and many of whom resided in the Roman states, Giacinto sailed from Bastia in a fine zebec, which was to return after landing him at Pisa, with as much arms and armour as could be purchased there, for which Giacinto possessed sufficient funds, having, when in the East, lodged whatever ransom money he had received for his prizes with the partner of the Pisan bankers, residing in Byzantium. On reaching Pisa, our hero, still accompanied by his devoted squire, purchased armour and horses, and, after a long and hazardous journey, reached the little venta at Puelfo, to which

place we shall now return, having been as brief as possible in the recital of incidents most important in themselves, but needless to detail at large, especially as the events before us are more than sufficient to fill our allotted space.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GONDOLIER.

OUR hero awaited the return of the messenger with intense anxiety. It is very strange, but true, that a presentiment of evil, about to befall us, sometimes oppresses the mind with wonderful power.

The whole of that day, Paoli could not divest his mind from dwelling upon the gloomy side of things. He dreaded he knew not what. A thousand dismal thoughts haunted his brain, leaving him bewildered and miserable. In

vain, Pulini, whose spirits were completely restored by the miraculous return, to his native land, of General Paoli, and by the emancipation of his beloved country from the hated yoke of Genoa, strove to cheer his master.

"What evil could happen?" urged the squire. "You know they reached Venice in safety. That lucky meeting with the Captain of the galley which conveyed the Signor Alviano and his daughter, from Byzantium to Venice, relieved your mind from a load of anxiety; and now, when almost within bow-shot of all you so ardently long for, you permit despondency to gain complete dominion over you."

"I have suffered so much," replied our hero, "and received such shocks of misfortune when least expected that, in fact, my worthy friend, I cannot master my thoughts. Two years have elapsed since I parted from my betrothed. What may not two years have done in such an abode as Venice?"

While the Knight and his squire, thus conversing, were walking along the borders of the Adriatic, and looking anxiously towards Chiozzi, they beheld, near sun-set, a sail leave the channel of the Lagunes and steer for where they stood. It was the light bark of the fisherman; and before half an hour had elapsed, he jumped upon the beach. At a single glance, Giacinto saw that all was not right: the youth came towards him with a disappointed look, and said—

“I am sorry, Signor, to say that I have not been a fortunate messenger.”

Then, taking from his vest the letters given him by our hero, he returned them, saying—

“Signor, there are no such noblemen now residing in Venice.”

Giacinto stood like one electrified. For an instant, he gazed upon the really anxious messenger, with a distracted look, and then ejaculated, repeating the words of the fisherman—

"No such noblemen now residing in Venice? Do I hear you aright?"

"Such, in *vero*, Signor, I was told, after spending four hours in diligent search; till, at length, a tall personage masked——"

"Ah, curse their masking!" interposed Pulini, "and wrapped in a long sable mantle, "continued the youth, having probably overheard my inquiries, laid his hand upon my shoulder, saying, "*Amico*, be wise, and ask no more questions concerning persons who no longer reside within this city. Take yourself out of Venice; for, trust me, if you do not, the air of this place will disagree with you. I stared, rather startled, Signor, after this black-looking person, who pressed my shoulder hard as he passed on; and, finding it useless to inquire further, I returned."

Paoli made no remark; but his squire, who knew his master well, guessed his thoughts and intentions. After a moment's silence, he said, calmly—

"Can you take us, with the early dawn, to Venice, Pietro ? You shall be well rewarded and incur no risk, as you can put us on board the first gondola you meet after entering the lagune."

"I shall be happy to serve you, Signor," replied the youth, "in any way, risk or no risk. I regret my ill success, because I see it troubles you ; but my boat and myself are at your service at any hour."

Pulini made no attempt whatever to dissuade his master from the dangerous project he intended. He simply remarked, that if he thought he could find out the mystery of the total disappearance of two noble families he might do so with much less danger.

"No," replied Paoli, "my mind cannot bear the suspense of waiting. Besides, in truth I should have gone to Venice at first without any hesitation ; but I wished not to alarm the Signor Alviano or his daughter by doing that which they would consider rash and unneces-

sary. As to risk, I see very little. It is carnival time ; and we can keep ourselves masked, and take up our abode in the Locanda—the Dalmatian arms—which is in a very retired part of the city. You may remember the landlord. It was he who recommended Julianio the gondolier to us. Lodging with him, we can make every necessary inquiry without attracting attention. I fear some fearful tragedy has been perpetrated in that city of tyrants, spies, and assassins.”

• Leaving their horses, and the chief part of their arms, under the care of their host, Paoli and his squire embarked at sun-rise. It was a splendid morning ; and a light breeze, just sufficient to fill the lofty and picturesque latine sail, from the westward, brought them rapidly into the Straits of Chiozzi. At that period, the intricate channels, leading into the waters encircling Venice, were neither buoyed, or marked, as at the present day, by immense poles. The safety of Venice lay in the im-

possibility of vessels, without Venetian pilots, navigating the innumerable and intricate channels.

Passing the Island of Brondolo, which lies directly in front of the town of Chiozzi, they entered what was then termed the sixth channel, which lies at the southern extremity of the Palestrina. This entrance required great skill to navigate, for innumerable banks are thrown up by the deposits of the rivers Brenta and Adige. With a leading wind, however, Pietro skilfully effected his passage, and then entered the one long canal, or channel, which led direct to Venice, distant some twenty miles. Within the vast lagune, the water was like a mirror, though a fine breeze flew over its surface, but its extreme shallowness, except in the canal, left the sea as tranquil as a fish-pond.

As they approached Venice, the appearance of which, rising from the very bosom of the

deep, had a most singular and beautiful effect, Pulini suddenly remarked—

“Signor, we have neither masks or mantles.”

Paoli had not bestowed a thought upon those matters, so fixed were his ideas upon one subject alone. Pietro, who was steering the craft, and heard the remark, immediately said,

“It will be better, then, Signor, if you do not wish to go ashore without them, that I cast anchor near the mouth of the Grand Canal. You can remain beneath the awning I will put up, while I can call a gondola, and bring back the articles wanted in less than an hour.”

This, notwithstanding his impatience, Giacinto considered the best plan.

It was yet early in the day when they let go their anchor, and hailed a passing gondola. They had sailed the six-and-twenty miles in four hours, the wind being favourable, and the water smooth.

Pietro, being furnished with money, was desired to purchase two plain brown mantles and masks, such as were commonly worn by wealthy citizens during carnival. In an hour, or little more, the young man returned with the articles. Putting them on, and placing a handsome reward in the hands of the young fisherman, the Knight and his squire stepped within the awning of the gondola, and bade the youth farewell, telling him to take care of the horses, and keep the armour from rust or stain.

"Where to, Signors?" asked the gondolier, resting upon his long and slender oar, while his assistant used another in the extreme bow of the boat.

"The Dalmatian Arms, if the house is still in existence," replied our hero.

"That it is, Signor," rejoined the man ;
"and a very snug and quiet inn it is."

Although Paoli ardently desired to ask many a question from the gondolier, he refrained.

After winding through the several canals, the boat landed them at the steps of the narrow causeway leading to the Dalmatian Arms, which was by no means a fortunate title for an albergo at that period, as Venice, having just lost all claims to Dalmatia, any mention of that country was extremely offensive to the rulers of Venice. Nevertheless, the worthy Signor, Mino Servite, the host of the Dalmatian Arms, had lived under that sign in peace and prosperity for twenty years, and was, therefore, very reluctant to change it, though strongly advised to do so.

The Signor Servite was a fat, short, indolent, but very honest, landlord ; never in any way troubling himself with the concerns of his guests, excepting as regarded their lodging and fare ; and then their bill, which, to do him justice, was always moderate.

When the knight and his squire entered the locanda, carrying a small leathern mail, containing a few necessaries, the host arose, and

demanded, without remarking that they still retained their masks—which was somewhat unusual—what he could do to serve them. Giacinto requested two private chambers entirely to themselves, if they could be had, as it was his intention to remain some days.

“You can, signors,” replied Servite, “at this moment, have half-a-dozen, as the only inmates residing in my locanda, are a Parmese Jew, (a dealer in jewellery), and two Lombard packmen.”

He then showed the way into a very neat and comfortable sitting-room, with two bedrooms leading from it.

“If these will do, signors, they are at your service, and perfectly private.”

Paoli threw off his cloak and mask, saying they would do extremely well.

“And now, signors,” continued the landlord, after casting a troubled and somewhat anxious glance upon the fine features of the Corsican, which seemed to throw the worthy

host into a maze of thought, "you seem to have arrived from a distance. What shall I order to be prepared for you?"

And again he looked in the face of his guest, and also into that of Pulini, with a very thoughtful expression.

"I will leave our fare entirely to yourself, Signor Servite," replied Giacinto; "but there is one question I would fain ask you. Two or three years ago, you had, I think, a relation, or, at least, a connection, of some kind, following the occupation of a gondolier." The landlord started, and even changed colour. "His name," continued the Corsican, "was Giuliano Verbano. Is he still in Venice?"

"Body of all the Saints!" exclaimed the host, casting a look round the chamber, and hastily closing the door, "you are the lost Signor Paoli, about whom Giuliano has been moaning and grieving these two years back. *Santa Madonna!*" he continued, rubbing his fat hands together in evident delight, "but the

poor boy will go distracted with joy. You are the Signor Paoli, are you not? I guessed it, Signor, the moment I saw your figure and face. Juliano has so often described you, and talked of you, that I saw you myself a hundred times in my dreams. I know all about you. You are quite safe here."

Paoli now repeated his question—

"Is Juliano, the gondolier, still in Venice?"

"*Cospetto*, Signor, he lives in this house—sleeps and eats here. Two hours ago, he was here, and will be at home again at sun-set. Oh, how the poor boy will leap for joy!"

Determined to wait for the return of Juliano, Paoli wisely refrained from asking any more questions of his host, being alarmed at the volubility of his tongue. He, therefore, requested the Signor Servite to prepare a meal for him and his companion, as they had eaten nothing since morning; not to utter his name to any human being; and to send in Juliano the moment he arrived.

"I am silent, Signor, as the grave."

So saying, the landlord hurried out to prepare a repast worthy of his distinguished guest, for such he considered the Corsican.

"Though that man," remarked Pulini, "is loquacious, you may rely upon his integrity; for I have heard Juliano speak much in favor of his kindness of heart, and generosity to him when he first came to Venice."

Our hero waited, with intense anxiety, the arrival of Juliano. Those only can judge of the sensations arising from deep mental perplexity who have experienced them.

At length, a quick, light foot was heard in the passage. The door opened, and Juliano, the gondolier, entered the room. With a joyful exclamation, and delight beaming in every feature of his honest countenance, Juliano pressed the hand frankly held out to him by Paoli, who had always felt interested in the youth from the first time he had employed him. Pulini shook him repeatedly and heartily

by the hand; and, for some moments, from various emotions, all three remained silent.

"I have much to ask of you, Julianò," began Paoli, after pacing the chamber two or three times to calm his own agitation. "Sit down. Nay, I insist on your doing so. There is wine. When you regain composure, let me know every event that has occurred since the hour I was banished from Venice. I mean all events connected with those families so dear to me. One question I will, however, hazard. The Marchese Tiepolo, I understand, is no longer in Venice; neither is Count Steno. You must have known the Signor Alviano and his daughter. Have they also left this ill-starred city?"

Juliano looked sadly down as he replied—

"Alas, Signor, they have disappeared; nor is it possible to conjecture how, or whither they have gone."

"I thought so," calmly said Paoli, while

Pulini looked stupified. "Now then, Juliano, I will listen to you."

"I will tell you all I know, and all I have seen, Signor," returned the gondolier; "and perhaps I may be able to throw some light upon the strange events that have taken place since you left Venice."

"Thou mayest glory, oh! Venice, in thy power and vast wealth; in thy firmness; in the vigilance of thy projects; but thy shameless perfidy, thy gloomy tranquillity, thy mysterious tyranny, convert thy people into trembling slaves."

Such were the thoughts of Paoli, as he listened to the gondolier's narrative, given in a simple manner.

"After your departure, Signor," began Juliano, "things went on as usual in the Palace Tiepolo. In truth, we were all, from the Marchese and his family, to the humble gondolier, much cast down by the singular and

unjust sentence passed upon you, Signor, by the council. The ladies went out but seldom; and very few parties of any kind took place in the Palace. At length, news arrived that you had reached the fleet, and had sailed; very shortly after the Lady Julia was married to the Count Steno, and they departed for the Roman States for a short period. The Lady Paulina felt sadly depressed at the temporary loss of her sister. I was now scarcely ever called on to take the family out upon the lagune. So passed several months.

“ At length, letters arrived from Byzantium. We heard of your success, and of the prizes you had taken in the famous battle of the Bosphorus. Your intended marriage with the daughter of the Signor Alviano also transpired. My knowledge of the events I am now relating to you, Signor, is not gathered from the idle chattering of the Marchese's domestics, but comes chiefly from the Marchese himself. I frequently took the Marchese to his villa on

the island ; and, during the passage, he conversed freely with me, knowing how deeply interested I felt in all concerning you, Signor.

“ The Signor Alviano and his daughter, to the great joy of the Lady Paulina, arrived in Venice ; and, shortly after, the Signor purchased the Palace Pisani. His daughter, the Lady Agnes, appeared in very delicate health, and in very low spirits. I was now often employed in taking the ladies out on fine days on the lagune, and often to the villa of the Marchese Tiepolo. I add, with pride, Signor, that I became a favourite of the Lady Agnes, and of her father, who would converse with me for an hour at a time concerning you, asking many questions, and wishing to discover whether you had any secret enemy in Venice.

“ Time rolled on, and, at length, I was established as the gondolier of the Lady Agnes, and was provided with a chamber in the court of her noble father’s mansion. Shortly afterwards I observed a great and singular

change take place in the three families to whom I was most devotedly attached. I mean the families of Tiepolo, Alviano, and Count Steno. The latter was, in truth, greatly altered. From being of a gay and sprightly temper, he suddenly grew thoughtful, reserved, and oftentimes gloomy. The very aspect of Venice seemed changed. Strange rumours were afloat. Dalmatia was lost to the State. Reports got abroad that there was treason to the State in high quarters.

“Sometime before this period, I had begun to remark a person in the establishment of the Signor Alviano, who held the situation of Secretary. This man’s name was Tomaso Mocenego. I cannot say precisely why I began to notice this man; but I did so; and the feeling grew upon me. He was of middle age, quiet and civil in his deportment and manner; but his look—his dull, leaden look seemed ominous. I knew not how it was; but when my eyes chanced to rest on this

man's face, a kind of chill came over me, at which I tried to laugh, but I could not shake it off.

“One morning, going with some packages from the Signora Alviano to the Lady Paulina, I met the old major domo, a domestic attached for years to the Marchese. He was greatly agitated, and, calling me aside, he said—‘The Count and Countess Steno have quitted Venice.’ Then, lowering his voice, he added—‘and for ever.’ He now hurried away, shaking his head, and muttering indistinct sentences to himself.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GONDOLIER'S NARRATIVE.

"I STOOD petrified and uneasy," continued Juliano, "looking after the old man, when the Marchese himself crossed the hall. Seeing me, he turned round, and, taking a letter from his vest, desired me to give it, as soon as I returned, to the Signor Alviano. I remarked that he looked very pale, and that his manner was agitated. I returned home in dismay. Doleful thoughts took possession of my mind; and the remain-

der of that day was passed in anxious conjectures. At night, it came on suddenly to blow a violent gale. I was roused by the fierce gusts that roared through the colonnades beneath my window ; and recollecting that I had left the two gondolas without protecting fenders, I jumped up, dressed hastily, and went out to the boats which were rubbing violently against the piles. Having secured them, I was returning, in the intense darkness of the night, through the colonnade that runs on one side of the Pisani Palace, when I heard a key turn in the lock of a private portal leading into the mansion of the Signor Alviano. Startled, for it was too late an hour for any of the domestics to be up—and besides this was not a door used by the inmates of the palace—I stood still, sheltered behind a pillar. A faint light was on the space before the entrance ; and after the door was opened, I saw a figure come forth closely muffled in a mantle. In turning to lock the door, the violent wind blew back

the cloak from the face of the individual wrapt in it—my mind somehow felt satisfied before that circumstance that in the person before me I beheld Tomaso Mocenego. The little light there was, came direct between the two columns, and fell upon the stranger's face. I was right. I saw the features clear enough. Tightening his mantle about him, and covering his face, Tomaso proceeded out upon the narrow causeway running along the whole border of the Pisani canal. This causeway leads to the Piazzetta of San Marco.

“Resolved to see what could take this man out at so strange an hour of the night, I cautiously followed ; keeping in the deep shadows of the mansions. Passing down the entire causeway, he turned into the square, and then entered beneath the colonnades- I followed unperceived, and saw him enter beneath a portico, go up to a private portal, place a key in the lock, open the door, and quietly enter-

ing, re-lock the portal. I stood astounded ; for I well knew the palace he had thus so familiarly entered, belonged to one of the dreaded rulers of Venice, the Count Luigi Passarini."

"Passarini, Passarini," exclaimed Paoli, with a start. "I have heard that name before. Yes, it comes strongly on my memory. The Signor Alviano often related to me anecdotes of his early life. I remember his saying that the most eventful period of his existence was passed in a Venetian merchant's counting-house—I forget the name of the Signor ; but he said he had saved his life ; and that his first rise in the world was through that merchant's gratitude. Alviano thought he had discovered the assassin afterwards in the merchant's nephew, who was named Passarini."

"St Antonio !" exclaimed Juliano ; "this opens a page in the mystery that follows. It

was said that the Signor Alviano was but a poor unknown and ignoble wanderer when he first entered Venice."

"Excuse me," interrupted Pulini, with flushed cheek, and in an agitated manner, "excuse me. The Signor Alviano might have been a poor wanderer from certain causes; but they err, Julian, who told you he was ignoble. No better blood flows in the body of the proudest noble in this cursed city, than in that of the Signor Alviano. I may not declare his real name; but Corsica is the land of his ancestors, and has been so for centuries."

Giacinto looked at his squire with amazement.

"Pardon me, my beloved lord," resumed Pulini, "that I retain any circumstance in my own breast without confiding it to you. The secret is not mine; for my word is passed to the Signor Alviano not to speak of my unlooked-for discovery till the day should

arrive that is to unite you to his beloved child."

"Praised Juliana," said Giacinto, in a more cheerful voice. I fancy I shall unravel this mystery yet."

"The Virgin grant it, Signor. But I myself begin to see a little more into the matter than before," said Juliana. "I stood, as I was saying, petrified. There could be no mistake. It was the palace Passarini, one of the grandest in Venice. As I waited wrapped in thought, I felt a heavy hand laid upon my shoulder, and actually shook with apprehension, so completely was my mind impressed with feelings of dread. Turning, however, sharply round, I beheld, standing by me, a tall figure covered with a mantle. His face was concealed by a mask. 'Who are you?' I demanded, trying to shake off his grasp. 'Good!' exclaimed the stranger. 'You are Giuliano Verbano. I am Caffagiola, the Bravo.'"

"Signor, the very hair of my head felt curling on my forehead. A strange fear came over me; and yet, Signor, I am not a timid man. But the name of Caffagiola the Bravo, made my very flesh creep."

"I have heard the man spoken of," said Paoli; "and heard strange and unlikely tales of his doings. I once asked Steno how it was, that such a man, was not hunted out and banished. The Count only laughed, and I remember well, his saying, 'Such men have their uses. Do not heed all you hear in Venice.'"

"There are in truth," resumed Juliano, "strange tales told of this man: frightful stories too. It is said, also, that he is playing a double game: that he is not a Venetian; and that when he came to Venice, years back, he had a wife and family, and that in a mad fit of jealousy he slew them all, and turned bravo. Be this as it may, I shuddered when I felt this man's hand upon my arm. 'Since

when,' asked the bravo, 'has Juliano, the once merry gondolier, turned spy?' I knew not what to say. 'You need not fear me, Juliano,' he continued in a low deep voice, and taking me further within the colonnade. 'I would not hurt a hair of your head, for your weight in ducats. But, Juliano, you play a desperate game. Why did you follow the man, that entered there? Know you who dwells within? Do you owe that man ill will? Has he injured you?' 'No,' I replied, gathering courage at the kind tone of the bravo's voice. 'I owe him no ill will. He never injured so poor an individual as Juliano Verbano.' 'Boy, you are not candid,' sternly returned the bravo. 'You followed him from some motive you think to hide from me. Now listen to me, Juliano,' and he pressed his heavy hand upon my shoulder, 'never follow this man again. Never meddle you with the actions of those who dwell in Palaces. Dream not of interfering with—'

But I will say no more. I know you, Juliano, though you know me only as Caffagioli, the Bravo. Go back to your bed. Speak not of what you have seen; and if you would be happy, neither dwell, or seek service, in the Palace of any Venetian noble. Envy them not their wealth, nor their power. Their short day of tyranny,' and his voice sunk low but clear, 'too often sets in blood. Go. Little as you think it, you have a friend, as well as countryman, in the detested Caffagiola the Bravo.' Letting go my arm, he turned away, and, in a moment, I lost all trace of him in the gloom of the colonnade.

"I did not tarry a moment after the departure of this strange being. I felt confounded; for I perceived clearly, that some fearful villany was at work against the family of the Signor Alviano. Notwithstanding the warning of the bravo, I resolved to warn the Signor as to his secretary. That he was a spy, there was now, in my mind, no doubt.

"Ah, Signor, now comes the miserable part of my narrative. I returned to my chamber, and, in spite of my perplexed thoughts, fell into a deep sleep. I did not awake till roused by some person shaking me. I started up. It was broad day-light. I rubbed my eyes. Oh, with what a sensation of dismay did I look upon the owner of the hand that roused me! One of the officers of San Marco stood by my bed-side. 'Get up, Juliano Verbano. Dress and follow me,' said the officer, in a harsh voice. Seeing me about to speak,—'Silence!' he exclaimed. 'Beware how you act. No questions. But be quick.' I gave myself up for lost. I shook in every limb. When I was dressed, the officer who was masked, pointed to a mantle and mask, exactly similar to his own. 'Put that on.' I obeyed; though many a time it entered my mind to make a desperate effort for my liberty, by a struggle with the man. But I conjectured there were others near at hand; and I was right. At the door

stood another ; and, under the colonnade two more. Not a soul did I see, as we passed out on the causeway. A long, dismal-looking gondola, with an awning stretched over its entire length, lay along-side. In it, were several figures, masked, and with mantles like that I wore. I entered the boat ; and, pulling out of that canal, it glided into the one leading to the horrid dungeons of St. Mark. I was half tempted to throw myself into the canal, so troubled did I feel with thoughts of perhaps perpetual imprisonment.

“ But, not to weary you, Signor, suffice it to say I was confined in a dismal cell ; and for five long months there I lay. Not one word did I exchange with a living being for those mortal long months. At the end of that period, an officer came into my cell, and desired me to follow him. I did so, though extremely weak. Coming to a chamber where stood two or three other officers, my eyes were blindfolded ; and I was led by one of the men

through various passages, and heard several doors open and shut. Then I felt the air of heaven blow upon my face. Still my guide led me on, till finally he stopped; and, in a distinct voice, said, 'Juliano Verbano, you are now free.' Oh, Signor, how my heart beat! for I thought I knew that voice. The words, 'You are free!' after five dismal months passed in a dreary dungeon, sent such a burst of joy through my heart, that I nearly fell to the ground. 'Move not the bandage from your face for the space of five minutes. Then go! Be wiser for the future. But for Caffagiola the Bravo, you had lingered out life, beneath the leads of St. Mark.'

"I stood rooted, as it were, to the ground. I seemed to grow there. At last, I tore the bandage from my eyes, and looked before me. It was not yet clear dawn. Still, it was bright enough to see all around. Saint Antonio! how my heart beats even now, at the remembrance. I stood within ten paces of the red columns of

St. Mark ; and, as I raised my eyes, my gaze fell upon ten miserable bodies, swinging between the columns. Giddy and panic-stricken with the ghastly sight, I rushed, as well as I was able, from the spot ; till, coming to the borders of a canal, I sat down to collect my thoughts. The city was buried in repose ; but, every moment, as the dawn increased, a solitary individual came forth from the houses. Presently, the fishing-boats began to leave the canals ; and then the daily work of the gondoliers commenced.

“ I heard the song of a light-hearted gondolier, as he rowed up the canal towards me. I knew the man well ; and, as he came near, I hailed him. ‘ Jesu Maria ! ’tis Julianio ! ’ he exclaimed, as he came up to the steps ; ‘ or rather, his ghost,’ he added as he looked at me. ‘ Where, in the name of all the saints, have you been these many months, eh, Julianio ? Was it fever that has reduced you to this skeleton state ? ’ ‘ Even so, Paulo,’ I answered. ‘ The

morning air does me good.' 'Nay, now I look at you, Juliano,' and his eye fully scanned my face, figure, and apparel, 'I perceive it was no fever. The saints preserve us! Get into my boat. You look faint.' I did as he bade me, and got him to row me to this house. I did not tell him one word; but the poor fellow guessed well where I came from. The worthy landlord of the Dalmatian Arms received me as one returned from the dead. I was too ill and weak, besides being wretched in mind, to do any thing but go to bed that night.

"The next day I felt better, and anxiously dressed myself in order to question the landlord as to the events that had happened during my five months' imprisonment. When I began to question him, the Signor Servite shook his head, and taking me into a private room, carefully closed the door.

" 'You see, Juliano,' began my kind friend,

'the less we talk of these things the better. We never know, in Venice, who hears us or sees us. The very walls appear to have ears. I have, myself, made it a rule never to inquire into anything that happens. Ask no questions and you will never get an uncivil answer. But, with you, Julianio, I will break through my rule for once. You want to know what has happened; and I can tell you very little. It is rumoured that the state was in worse danger than in the conspiracy of the unfortunate Faliero—that Dalmatia was lost by treachery; and that a correspondence was detected between some of our nobility and the Greeks; also with Genoa. Be it as it may, several of our Signors, and two or three of our nobility have disappeared. Amongst those who have not been heard of since, is the worthy Signor Alviano and his family: his servants were all dismissed, and his palace was closed with the seals of St Mark upon the doors. Above ten

unfortunate wretches were hung between the red columns, and double the number drowned in the Lagunes. Gloom and dismay hung over the city for weeks.' 'And the Marchese Tiepolo,' I demanded with gloomy forebodings. 'With respect to the princely Marchese Tiepolo—for he had the heart and the actions of a Prince—they dared not touch him, I believe even if inclined. He is connected with the reigning doge, and the most leading nobles of the state. Besides, he was ever the favourite of the people; relieved them from starvation at the time of the great Pestilence, and lent immense sums to the government. In fine, no noble in Venice had a right to hold so high a head as the Marchese Tiepolo. As far as I could learn, when the Signor Alviano disappeared, the Marchese felt indignant and insulted. What he did, of course I know not. They say he demanded a public trial of his kinsman; and they also say that the rulers of

Venice know nothing of the Signor Alviano, save that he was guilty of treason to the state ; but that he had fled before he could be arrested. This Giuliano,' added the Signor Servite in a whisper, ' I know to be false. The Marchese, indignant and disgusted, immediately announced his intention of quitting Venice, which he did the following week with his whole family, deeply regretted by all classes. Where he went of course I cannot say ; but within the last month, orders have arrived to the Marchese's agent here, to dispose of his palace, his villa, and all the property he possessed in Venice. His princely mansion now belongs to the family of Contarini, and the mansion of the Signor Alviano has fallen into the possession of Count Luigi Passarini's son.'

" Such, Signor Paoli, is the entire substance of all I could glean from the Signor Servite, and from several others whom I cautiously questioned. Never since the night already

mentioned, have I encountered the bravo Caffagiola ; and I merely remained in Venice, which I ardently longed to quit, in the hope of gaining some intelligence of those who have so miserably disappeared."

CHAPTER XIV.

COUNT LUIGI PASSARINI.

DURING the narrative of the gondolier, Paoli made few remarks; but though somewhat unaccountable in many parts, one thing appeared evident: the Signor Alviano, he felt satisfied, was the victim of private vengeance, and that the enemy who had effected his ruin was Count Luigi Passarini. In times past, Alviano, when talking to our hero of the events of his early life, never related any distinct or continued narrative, but only described a few

remarkable passages or events. Nevertheless, by adding a few surmises, he could easily imagine that the vengeance of Passarini was caused by Alviano's discovery that he was the assassin of his uncle.

Paoli also conjectured that, so far from the Signor Alviano having fled from Venice, he probably at that moment either lingered in the dungeons of St Mark, or had perished through Passarini's machinations. But where was Alviano's only and most tenderly-loved child? Could the revenge perpetrated against the father, have fallen also on the daughter? Did the hatred of Passarini aim at the annihilation of all belonging to his victim? Was their wealth also an object of his treachery. These, and many other thoughts tormented Paoli's brain the night after hearing the narrative of the gondolier.

The dearest wish of Juliano's heart was gratified; for our hero took him into his service, promising that when he quitted Venice h

should not be left behind; and that for the future, he might set his mind at rest. Leaving Pulini to give the young gondolier a brief narrative of their adventures in the east, he himself retired to ponder over what he had heard. Paoli was well aware of the despicable and atrocious system of espionage adopted by the rulers of Venice. A secret body of police dwelt within the city; and in every mansion almost, the happy tranquillity of domestic life was poisoned. Not a whisper of discontent or remark upon the government escaped the ever-listening ears of the accursed spy. Even inoffensive sayings were distorted by those wretches for their own individual benefit; for they often grew rich upon the ruin of those whose bread they ate. Suddenly, individuals would disappear from society, and some never more be heard of; and, oftentimes, to breathe an inquiry after their fate, was construed into an act of guilt.

The flight of Count Steno from Venice, did

not so much surprise him. Paoli knew the Count well ; he was much given to political intrigue, and had powerful enemies in the city. Besides, the noble relatives of the unfortunate Marino Faliero, looked upon the Count with most hostile feelings. Altogether, it was very possible that Steno might have committed himself with the government.

On the following day, Paoli sent for Julianio.

"I have been thinking much," said the former, "upon what you related last night ; and the conclusion I have come to is, that only from Count Luigi Passarini can we ascertain the fate of the Signor Alviano and his daughter."

"True, Signor," replied the gondolier. "I have thought that long ago ; but alas ! against one so powerful what can be done?"

"Much, Julianio, much, by three resolute spirits. Most conspiracies fail through the multitude of those admitted into the plot, and

the variety of private schemes contemplated by the conspirators. Now, we are but three; we have but one object in view, and I am generally speaking of a sanguine disposition. I think I heard you say to Pulini, yesterday evening, while I was apparently buried in thought, that you have frequently seen the Count Luigi since your release from captivity. Is that the case?"

"Yes, Signor; such is the truth. In fact, any one may see him once or twice every week."

"How so? And where, Juliano?"

"The Count," replied the gondolier, "purchased the villa and land belonging to the Marchese Tiepolo on the little island of Geno. You may remember, Signor Paoli, he commenced the villa before you left for Byzantium. The Count Luigi is making great alterations in the villa, and building a kind of temple on the highest part of the island. He goes there in his gondola once or twice every week, now the

fine season has set in, and stays till dusk. I have passed him several times on the lagoon."

"Any one with him, Julian?" eagerly questioned the Corsican.

"Sometimes his son, Signor; but he is mostly alone, with four gondoliers."

"Well then," calmly observed our hero, "we must seize this Count Luigi."

Juliano started, as if shot; while the stout-hearted squire rubbed his hands, exclaiming—

"By the mass, my lord, never was there a better idea. We can do it."

Though the very first to restrain, or endeavour to restrain, his master, when bent upon what he considered a rash or wild project, Pulini was now as anxious as our hero himself. To the Signor Alviano, he felt a strong attachment; and, knowing how deeply devoted his master was to the daughter, and how impossible it would be to move him from

Venice till some clue was discovered, he caught eagerly at the proposed seizure of one of the dreaded Council of Ten.

"Listen to my plans," said Paoli, in a cheerful voice. "You say Count Luigi returns from the little island about dusk. Now this island is one of the most remote on the lagune. You, Julian, must first of all purchase a common lagune fishing-boat. Say nothing whatever to our worthy landlord. Not that I fear his loquacity; but I am resolved, in this most treacherous city, not to bring danger or destruction upon any one besides ourselves. Can you purchase, without suspicion, such a boat as I have indicated?"

"Most certainly, Signor; and, curious enough, before your arrival, I was about to do so. You may remember the bravo said to me, 'Seek not service beneath the roof of a Venetian Noble.' Since my release, having no gondola of my own, and unwilling to take service, I usually earned a few sequins by either aiding

my intention of rowing a gondola for a friend. I like the life of a fisherman, since the late unfortunate events, much better than serving as a gondolier; and Signor Servino has offered me the money to buy a boat.'

"Well, that is fortunate. Purchase a boat; and to avoid suspicion, receive the money from our worthy host. I shall take care to restore him the amount. As soon as you have got this boat you and Pulini, who may very easily disguise himself in fisherman's attire, must go forth and watch patiently till Fortune favours us. Should you see Count Luigi on the island, either alone or with his son, return immediately for me. You must have arms stowed away in the boat under your nets. That is all you have to do. Leave the rest to me. I forgot to say that we must be provided with masks and mantles. I am about, Giuliano, to play a desperate game, and to tax your heart, my poor fellow, for you have suffered much."

"Nay, Signor, do not wound my heart. Can you, for a moment, think I would shrink? No; not if the rack and the gibbet were certain to follow. Try me, Signor Paoli; only try me."

Paoli pressed the poor gondolier's hand kindly, saying—

"I never doubted your courage or your fidelity, Julianio. But I almost repented dragging one so unconnected with me into the unlucky destiny that seems to pursue me."

"I will purchase the fishing-boat this very evening," said Julianio; "for the day after tomorrow is the day Count Luigi generally visits the island."

"Now, what are your plans, Signor?" asked Pulini, after the departure of Julianio; "for although we may succeed in entrapping this Count Luigi, it by no means follows that we shall make him confess."

"I agree with you, Pulini, responded Gianto. "He may remain obstinately silent

under any threats. Still the prospect of instant death, and the ignoble one of drowning in his own impure lagune, may do much. If he should persist in silence, I cannot, in conscience, meddle with his life. But I will try other means; we must bind and gag him. Giuliano knows the Chiozzi channel. We will take him to where we left our horses, and carry him without the Venetian territories, and, by strict confinement, wring from him a confession that the fear of death might not have the power to do."

"I have heard Giuliano say," remarked Pulini, "that this Count Luigi is a coward at heart."

"So is every assassin," returned Paoli. "A treacherous villain, like Passarini, is ever a coward when tried. And my life to a ducat, he will become abject with fear the moment he sees he is helplessly in our power."

Notwithstanding the hopes of our hero, a fortnight elapsed before Giuliano could give

notice that the Signor Passarini had landed alone on the Island of Geno.

It was a calm, lovely day in the early summer, when Paoli, masked, and enveloped in a plain, brown mantle, embarked on board the fishing-boat of Julianio. A low, canvas awning was in the boat, beneath which he stretched himself upon some nets, any other position being quite impossible. Pulling quietly out from the canals, they slowly pursued their way to the picturesque island of Geno. Within a thousand yards of it was another island—a mere mass of sand rock, but famous for the resort of a certain species of fish, peculiar to the lagunes of Venice.

Off this island, our hero, Pulini, and Julianio cast anchor, watching intently any movements going on in the island of Geno. Passarini's gendola had to pass close by where they were anchored on his return to Venice.

"We must be very alert Julianio," remarked Paoli, "and be certain of running

foal of his gondola ; for if once he passes us, it would be utterly impossible to overtake him."

Slowly were the day to the impatient occupants of the fishing-boat ; and yet, during the tedious hours of delay, the scene around them was lovely in the extreme. Scarce five miles off lay the vast and imposing city of the waves, the self-styled Queen of the Adriatic. The lagoon, studded with islands—on some of which rose many a stately mansion—was also covered with countless barks, from the galley and argosy, to the gilded barge, the sombre gondola, and the picturesque fishing crafts. Music and joyous laughter came from many a gay bark that floated by during the day ; but, as evening closed, that remote part of the lagoon became entirely deserted ! yet the gondola of Count Luigi still remained moored to the quay of the island.

The shades of night were fast creeping over the sluggish waters, undisturbed even by a ripple,

when Juliano gave notice that the gondola of the Count had pushed from the quay, The anchor of our conspirators was up in a moment, Juliano and Pulini taking the oars, while Paoli seized the tiller, as they pulled slowly on towards Venice. Presently, the gondola of the Count came rapidly on, under the vigorous strokes of four stout oarsmen. When nearly along-side, Paoli put down his tiller, saying, in a low voice—

“Pull your best.”

The next moment, with a violent shock, they ran foul of the gondola of one of the terrible rulers of Venice.

A volley of curses and other maledictions was the commencement of hostilities on the part of the Count's gondoliers, who were astounded at the audacity, or insolence, of a fishing-boat running foul of their illustrious master's boat on the broad lagune. But the next instant, Juliano and Pulini leaped aboard; and, with their swords at the throats of the unarmed, and

now terrified, gondoliers, soon quieted their outcries, while Paoli, joining the onset, advanced towards the pavilion, just as Count Luigi threw back the silken curtains to demand the reason of the uproar. The Count stood stupefied on seeing the assailants, then, with a face pale as death, fell back, and drew a dagger from his vest. A handsome lamp lit the pavilion; and, as Paoli entered, the Count sank upon the luxurious cushions, saying—

“Who are you? and what means this insolent intrusion?”

Juliano was right. Count Luigi Passarini was a coward—a very coward in heart and soul. Paoli saw that at a glance; and a smile of scorn curled his lip, as, dashing his mask from his face, he said—

“We have met before, Count Luigi Passarini, and, no doubt, you remember who I am. Consult your heart, if you possess such a commodity, and you will guess, at once, the cause of my intrusion.”

Ghastly was the face of the Venetian, as his strained gaze fell upon the noble features of the Knight.

Throwing open the curtains of the pavilion, Paoli showed to the startled Passarini that they were the sole occupants of the gondola ; for he had settled with Pulini that he should take the four gondoliers into their boat, and land them on the little island off which they had anchored. A night passed there, at that season of the year, would be of very little inconvenience to them.

“Now, Count Luigi Passarini, you see we are alone. I have staked my life upon the issue of this attempt. Yours, Count, is also at stake ; for I tell you, by this cross,” and the Knight kissed the cross-handle of his sword, “if you deceive me, or falsely answer the questions I shall now ask you, you will find your grave in the waters of this accursed lagune, which, for ages, have hidden the bodies of your victims.”

Vain was every effort of Count Luigi to summon courage. His pride, his scorn, his haughty temper, all fell beneath the withering glance of the Corsican.

“I now ask you, Count, of what crime was the Signor Alviano accused, that himself and his family should be cut off from all ties and connections?”

Passarini, for a moment, was unable to answer. He was well aware of the determined spirit of his questioner. The Count was one of the Council that insisted on Paoli's banishment from Venice. He therefore rapidly turned over in his mind all the chances in his favour, and saw, in the end, that no mode of escape was left but in speaking the truth. Therefore, in reply to the Corsican's question, he said—

“Bartolomeo Alviano was accused of treason to the State, was tried and found guilty.”

“Treason, Count!” returned Paoli; “what on earth could the merchant Alviano have done to incur such a charge?”

"It was distinctly and fully proved," replied the Venetian, "that Bartolomeo Alviano corresponded with the Greeks of Byzantium, after it had been declared treason to do so. Letters were also discovered proving he corresponded also with Genoa. Again, it was ascertained that he had lodged nearly the whole of his immense wealth in the Bank of Saint George in Pisa, though that wealth was gained under the protection of the banners of St. Mark."

"You could tell, probably," interrupted Paoli, disgusted at hearing on what paltry charges an innocent man was convicted of treason and condemned, "you could tell who was the writer, or forger of those letters. You, Count Luigi, had in your service a man named Tomaso Mocenego, who was forced upon the Signor Alviano as a secretary."

The Count started to his feet. Again his hand grasped his dagger; and an expression of fiendish malice passed over his features.

But one look at the powerful form of the Corsican, and at his self-possession, as if he were merely in the presence of a child, demonstrated how useless would be any struggle with such a man, even were his associates not at hand.

"I know more, Count Luigi, of the past than you can imagine. He who could have the devilish heart to attempt the assassination of his uncle, would be capable of perpetrating any crime. This was a random shot on the part of the Corsican ; but the blanched cheek, and trembling limbs of the Venetian proved to Paoli that his surmise was correct.

"And," pursued our hero, "such a man could easily plot the downfall of one against whom he nourished a deadly hate. But no more of this. I now ask when the Signor Alviano was found guilty, what was his fate? And what became of his child, his only daughter? For surely," and the lip of our hero curled with bitter scorn and contempt, "surely, she was not charged with treason."

"The Signor Alviano was sentenced to perpetual banishment from Venice and all her colonies; and whatever property he possessed within the territories of Venice, was confiscated."

"And how was this iniquitous sentence carried into execution?"

"They were conveyed, under an escort of six officers of the Republic beyond the territories of Venice, and left at the bounding stone of the Paduan territory.

"Will you swear to this, Count Luigi Passarini?" sternly demanded the Corsican.

"Will you swear on the cross, will you stake your salvation that neither Alviano nor his daughter linger in any of the prisons of Venice? Will you, on your sacred oath, avouch that they were left beyond your boundaries, free and unshackled, to go whither they pleased? Will you solemnly swear to this?" And Paoli advanced close to the Venetian.

"Most willingly, and, in truth," exclaimed Passarini, "will I swear."

As the Corsican held to him the cross of his sword to kiss, a fiendish spirit of vengeance rose in the heart of the Venetian. Quick as light, he drew the poniard from his vest, and struck it with all his force at the heart of the Corsican, forgetful of what might be his own fate afterwards. In striking the blow, he started back with an impious curse; and, slipping, in his eagerness and terror, he fell backwards against the flimsy curtains of the pavilion, bursting them; and the gondola—one of those built for speed—heeled over with his weight. Uttering a cry of agony, Count Luigi Passarini disappeared beneath the dark waters of the lagune.

Paoli, perfectly unhurt—for he wore beneath his vest a chain-shirt of exquisitely wrought Milan steel—when he saw the treacherous villain falling overboard, leaned over to catch him before he disappeared; but so sudden

had been the fall of the Count that he was too late.

It was now quite dark ; and, as Paoli looked over the side, expecting each moment to see the Count rise to the surface, and intending to pull him on board, he heard the voice of Pulini at a short distance, say—

“ Did you hail, Signor ? Has anything happened ? ”

“ Yes,” exclaimed Paoli ; “ look about you. Count Luigi has fallen into the water, after making a most villanous attempt to stab me.”

“ Then the devil has his own, by this time,” muttered the squire, as he and Juliano pulled up along-side.

“ We are not fifty yards from the island,” said Juliano. “ We have drifted close in. Perhaps he has swam ashore.”

“ I scarcely think that,” returned Paoli, gazing somewhat anxiously over the dark waters ; “ for he struck his head against that

iron staunchion, and went down like a stone. Row round some distance, and see if there is any sign of him. Villain as he surely was, let him not die with all his sins upon his head."

But vain was their search; no trace of Count Luigi was to be discovered.

"There is no use in our lingering here, Signor," said Pulini. "If he has gone to keep company with the many victims he has condemned to the same fate, we must leave him there; and should he have got to yonder island, there let him stay. But it's very clear, if he has escaped with life, the sooner we are out of Venice the better."

"Let us search the island," said Juliano. "If he has perished, we are perfectly safe; but if he has escaped, we had better not attempt to return to Venice, but make for Chiozzi at once. The gondoliers on the island have no idea who we are. Pulini and I can land, and five minutes will take us all over the bank."

"Do so," said Paoli. "I will await your return."

In half-an-hour they returned.

"He is not there," said Pulini; "therefore must be drowned. The four men were rolled up in an old sail under a shed on the top of the bank, apparently very little troubled about their situation. They take us for *ladri de mare*. We said nothing to them about the fate of their master; but walked all round the bank, and saw no trace of him."

"What a singular fate for a Councillor of St. Mark!" thought Paoli, as, entering the fishing boat, they pulled for Venice, leaving the gondola of the so late powerful Count Luigi Passarini to float with the passing breeze.

"And now, Signor," said Juliano, "I think we had better make but little stay in Venice. When I land you at the piazzetta, I will take this boat where it will not be seen, for fear any of those men might recognize it; not that

that would be very likely ; for it is so exactly similar to all of its class, that we run little risk. Still it is better to be secure."

After landing, Paoli and his squire proceeded to the Dalmatian Arms, where Paoli imparted to his anxious attendant all the conversation that passed between him and the Councillor of St. Mark.

CHAPTER XV.

BARTOLOMEO ALVIANO.

WE must now entreat the indulgence of our readers for the retrograde movements we are forced to make in our story.

In the first volume, we mentioned how the younger brother of the Marchese Damari left his native home in the little island of Capraja, to seek his fortunes upon the continent of Europe. On landing on the shores of Italy, in compliance with the wishes of his kind and

affectionate, but proud, brother, he dropped the name of Damari, and took that of Alviano.

On the early fortunes of the then enthusiastic youth, it is needless to dwell. Like all who view the world at a distance, he entered it to be deceived and plundered by false friends and false representations. We take up his narrative, therefore, at the period when he entered Venice, poor and friendless, but neither dispirited nor hopeless. His object in resorting to Venice, was to procure employment in some of the great mercantile houses ; for Bartolomeo was ashamed to return, thus poor and stripped of the large sums with which he had departed, to the open arms of his brother.

"No," he reasoned with himself, "I will struggle yet awhile with fortune. I am older, and not so new to the crafts of the world."

But the poor, lonely, unfriended foreigner might have wandered the narrow causeways of

Venice for months without succeeding in the object of his ambition.

Accident, or that fickle dame, Fortune, stood his friend.

Assassination, not at all a rare occurrence in any of the fair cities of the south at that period, was particularly common in Venice, and caused very little astonishment.

One night, returning after a solitary and musing ramble beneath the arcades of the only square in Venice—that of San Marco—Bartolomeo Alviano saved a Signor's life from the dagger of an assassin, by interposing, courageously but heedlessly, his own body in the way of the murderer's steel. Though severely wounded, Alviano, a man of the pen not the sword, struggled gallantly; for the villain strove to complete his purpose. In the scuffle the assassin's mask fell to the ground, and Alviano beheld the man's features, though the prostrate Venetian did not. The face was remarkable, and it remained strongly impressed

on the memory of Alviano. Some persons approaching, the assassin fled.

It was now ascertained that the individual, against whose life the ruffian's dagger was originally aimed, was a merchant, by name Dalmasso. He ordered the senseless body of his preserver to be carried to his own palace. During many weeks, Alviano's recovery was doubtful; every care was bestowed upon him; and when he was able to leave his couch, the merchant requested to know to whom he was so deeply indebted.

Alviano told his simple tale, excepting his real name and birth-place. His fine open countenance, frank manners, and the abilities he at times displayed in conversation, won the esteem of the Venetian; and Alviano was offered a respectable place in his employment, with a good salary, which was accepted with gratitude and joy.

In conversing with the Signor Dalmasso, Alviano discovered that he had not the slight-

est idea as to who the villain was that attempted his life. In fact, so well respected and beloved was the wealthy merchant, that even his friends were of opinion that his person must have been mistaken, by the assassin, for another.

One morning the Signor Dalmasso said to his young friend.

"You are now, thank God, quite recovered. I will take you to my counting-house. My nephew, a steady, quiet youth, is just returned from Trieste; he is my chief clerk. I must make you acquainted with him."

On entering the long and well-lighted room of the merchant's counting-house, Alviano perceived that nearly twenty clerks were employed writing at a long table.

"You, and my nephew," said the merchant, "will have a smaller, and more cheerful, chamber to yourselves. Follow me."

In another apartment into which the mer-

chant led, sat a young man, rather plainly attired; for, at this period, no law existed relative to the dress of Venetian subjects. The young man had his back to the merchant and his *protégé*, but, on the former saying—

“Andrea, let me introduce my young friend and your future companion to you. You will soon be on terms of cordiality, I feel convinced, as I know, Andrea, you will value your uncle’s preserver.”

The young man rose, and turned quietly round, at the same time stretching out his hand towards Alviano, and saying, in a calm, measured voice—

“As the preserver of your life, dear uncle, I envy the Signor Alviano; but with all my heart I welcome him.”

As the youth rose, and turned, Alviano raised his eyes to his face; but, as he did so, he felt the blood forsake his cheeks; his limbs trembled; and, instead of taking the offered hand, he staggered a pace back.

"I fear, uncle," said the youth, "you have brought the Signor out too soon. The change of air, Signor Alviano, has affected you."

"Merciful Providence!" mentally ejaculated Alviano, "do I dream? do I behold the assassin? or does an imaginary likeness distract me?"

Seeing the distressed look of the worthy merchant, who kindly offered him his arm, knowing how strange his conduct must appear, and feeling that, after all, he might be mistaken, Alviano rallied, exerted himself, pleaded sudden pain, and, after a time, really thinking he must have been under an illusion, returned the young man, thanks for his kindness; and, shortly after, the merchant left them, saying—

"There, I am glad to see you recovered, my dear young friend. I leave you under the care and tuition of Andrea."

Bartolomeo felt strangely perplexed. It seemed to him incredible that so very young a man as the merchant's nephew should commit

so foul a crime. And for what purpose ! he thought, he must have been mistaken, yet the features of the assassin, like those of Andrea, were most remarkable in their expression.

Plunged in reverie, Alviano was unconscious that the young man's eyes were steadily fixed upon him, till at length his meditations were broken by the merchant's nephew saying—

“What does the Signor Alviano think of Venice ? Though, in sooth,” he added, with a singular smile upon his lips, “your first intimacy with our citizens was a rough one.”

“As you may suppose,” replied Alviano, “I can know but little of either Venice or its inhabitants ; but it is a fair city to look upon, and doubtless its citizens are no more vicious than those of any of the other cities of Italy.”

“Ah, Signor Alviano, you do not know us. More assassinations and secret murders take place within the confines of Venice than in any other four cities of Italy, even including Rome. You must be very careful in your choice of

acquaintance, Signor Alviano. And I am sorry I can, in that respect, be of little service to you; for two years I have been absent from Venice. I spent some months in Rome; and the last eight months, I have been transacting business for my most worthy uncle, in Trieste. I expect shortly to proceed to Byzantium, where my uncle has established an extensive branch of commerce."

"I must be mistaken," thought Alviano.

After some trivial conversation, Andrea suddenly said—

"You cannot be aware," Signor Alviano, "of the deep debt of gratitude I owe to the Signor Dalmasso. I must give you a very short sketch of the family of which you now form a part. You must know," continued the youth, "that I have a twin brother."

Alviano gave a slight start, and looked up into the calm, cold features of the speaker, who, however, without noticing the emotion of Alviano, continued his recital.

“Our father was the Count Passarini ; and, some years before his mysterious disappearance, he was one of the first, and most opulent of our Venetian nobles. The Count was unjustly accused of joining in a most dangerous conspiracy against the state. His papers were seized, and he himself suddenly vanished. Our mother perished in giving us birth, after our father’s disappearance—we were scarcely two years old at the time—the whole of his property was confiscated—he was declared a traitor, and an outlaw. Alas ! it was, I fear, too well surmised that he died by torture, in the dungeons of St. Mark. Several other nobles were accused. Some were executed ; some banished ; while many citizens, of minor note, were daily suspended from the red columns. Guilty or not guilty, from that day to this, nothing more was ever heard of our ill-fated parent. We were immediately adopted by our excellent uncle, and only relative, the Signor Dalmasso, and carefully

reared by him. But, notwithstanding all his care in our moral education, my brother turned out very wild, very dissipated, and of an obstinate and wilful temper. He lost large sums of money ; and, finally, he fled this city with a lady of exceeding beauty, but, as you may suppose, very low morals. Since that, we have never heard of him ; although," and Andrea spoke with marked emphasis, "it has been said he was seen some time back in Venice. Now, Signor, you have, in a few words, our family history. Can you wonder if I feel a profound veneration for the character of the Signor Dalmasso, who has not only paid immense sums for my brother's follies, but has spared no expense in my education. He intends making me his partner, and has also hinted, in plain terms, that I shall be his heir."

"He is, in truth," Signor Passarini," replied Alviano, in a much more cheerful voice, "a most kind and noble Signor. And now,"

thought Alviano to himself, I have been deceived. Doubtless the twins are like one another. Could the brother have secretly returned to Venice to assassinate his uncle? And for what, if the Signor Andrea Passarini is already constituted his heir?"

Shortly after, the young men returned together to the mansion of the Signor Dalmasso, where Andrea had a suite of apartments.

Days, weeks, and months rolled on without the occurrence of any other event of importance. Every day increased the confidence of the merchant for his *protégé*; and every day, despite his efforts, Alviano grew more distrustful of the merchant's nephew.

Passarini's chief companion was one of the head-clerks of the establishment. This young man was, by birth, a Paduan, of respectable parents, so far as his own assertion went, and an orphan. His name was Guido Mussato. In manners, he was mild, silent, and reserved; but the expression of his ill-favoured features

had something so unaccountably repellent, that few, if any, excepting the merchant's nephew, could bear his society.

Alviano steadily avoided all intercourse with this young man ; and from some chance expressions he one day unintentionally overheard all his former suspicions concerning Andrea Passarini were revived. By attentive observation, he became convinced that Andrea, with the assistance of Mussato, intended to take the life of the Signor Dalmasso. Alviano knew not what steps to take. To attempt to open the eyes of the uncle to the character of the nephew, would be a difficult, if not an impossible task ; as he possessed no positive proofs to support so horrible an accusation. He himself had heard quite sufficient while Mussato was closeted with Andrea. But would not the word of Dalmasso's nephew be believed more readily than his ?

One night, as he lay awake, pondering how

he might save his generous patron from the base designs of his nephew, he fancied he saw a light flash across his chamber from the key-hole, or from under the door. The hour was extremely late. No domestics slept in front of the mansion. In fact, the part of the house appropriated to the clerks, was, in a manner divided from the front by a pair of large folding-doors, crossing the hall. A large bell was suspended within their side, from which a wire-rope led into the chamber of the Signor Dalmasso, whose nephew slept in the apartment beyond that occupied by Alviano, but in the same corridor.

Suspicious of every trifle, Bartolomeo no sooner beheld the light than he arose; and, throwing on part of his dress, cautiously opened the door, and looked along the corridor. To his great surprise, he beheld, at the further end, a figure bearing a light. The figure was, for a few seconds, stationary. Scarcely giving himself time for thought, he returned into his

chamber, and took down from the mantle-piece a dagger that hung there, and hurried back to the corridor. The figure had vanished, and not a ray of light was to be seen. Groping along the wall, and arriving at the end of the passage, he again caught a glimpse of the light, and then distinctly perceived two figures ascending the flight of stairs leading to the Signor Dalmasso's sleeping-room. Bartolomeo, himself, stood in obscurity; but he easily recognised the two figures to be Andrea Passarini, and Guido Mussato.

On reaching the top of the stairs, they paused and Alviano perceived Mussato hand the lamp to his companion. Taking from beneath his mantle a bowl, he poured something from a bottle into the vessel; and then he and his confederate fixed two masks upon their faces.

Alviano shuddered, and trembled in every limb.

"Gracious Heaven!" he exclaimed, "they are going to poison my benefactor. His first

impulse was to turn, rush back, and gain that part of the mansion where slept the domestics; but he reflected that before they could be brought to the assistance of their master he would no longer need it. Therefore, without further hesitation, he grasped his dagger, and, rushing across the passage, accelerated the flight, of steps almost at a bound. As he approached he heard the sounds of contention from the merchant's chamber, into which he sprang, resolved to sacrifice himself in an effort to save him.

The moment was, in truth, a critical one; Muscato held a poniard to the breast of the Signor Dalmasso, who struggled violently, while his nephew was endeavouring to pour the contents of the bowl down his throat.

As Alviano darted with a loud cry into the chamber, the poisoned bowl fell from the hands of the assassin, and the grasp of the villain, Muscato, relaxed. With a vigorous effort, the Signor Dalmasso sprang from his couch, and, seizing the bell-rope, pulled with violence.

"Stab him, Guido!" screamed Passarini, as, with the yell of a fiend, he darted upon Alviano, who fought manfully; but was struck bleeding to the floor. The next moment, however, the sound of men's voices were heard. Dashing the lamp upon the floor, and stamping his foot upon the prostrate body of the merchant, the villain fled. Andrea Passarini effected his escape; but his accomplice, Mussato, after a fierce struggle, was secured.

Several weeks passed before Bartolomeo recovered from his wound. The Signor Dalmasso then informed him of what had occurred during his illness. Satisfied that his nephew had fled from Venice for ever, his outraged uncle left him to his fate. Mussato, handed over to the authorities of Venice was branded on the forehead and condemned to the galleys for life.

Already greatly attached to his preserver, the Venetian merchant formally adopted him according to the fashion of the times; and St

Mark acknowledged him as an elected son of the Venetian Republic ; shortly afterwards Alviano's name became associated with that of Dalmasso as partner ; and some years subsequently he married into the noble house of Pisani, and thus became connected with the Marchese Tiepolo. He then sailed for Byzantium in order there to establish extensive mercantile connections. In Byzantium, he lost his beloved wife, which for a long period, plunged him into the deepest grief. His only child Agnes was sent to Venice and committed to the care of her aunt, the Marchesa Tiepolo, to be educated with her daughters. On the death of the Signor Dalmasso, who was carried off by the great pestilence that nearly depopulated Venice, he inherited the whole of his great wealth.

During these eventful years, Alviano had dispatched several couriers with letters to his brother the Marchese Damari. Kind and affectionate replies were received ; still the same

eccentric idea with respect to commerce retained possession of Damari's mind. He said in one of his letters, "The name you have selected has been a fortunate one. Retain it; at least while I live." This appeared a strange prejudice to the liberal and generous mind of Bartolomeo Alviano; but he little heeded distinction of blood or high sounding names. His child was all a fond father could wish. She would be as eagerly sought after as the heiress of the wealthy Alviano, as if known to be the niece of the proud, feudal lord of the little Island of Capraja.

Years rolled over; and the long absent merchant returned, as we have already seen, with his beautiful daughter, to Venice after an absence of twenty years.

During those twenty years, we must briefly state how fared the fortunes of the outcast Andrea Passarini. After flying from Venice, he sought refuge in the Tuscan states, where, hav-

ing been a gambler from his earliest years, he addicted himself to that vice with increased pertinacity and with various changes of fortune; till being detected in a fraud, he fled from Florence into the Roman states; and in Rome, to his astonishment, he encountered his twin brother, Luigi, living in great splendor. This man, who in person, was identical with his brother, differed from him, in some respects, in mind and disposition. Luigi was not a cold-blooded villain; but he was a wild, profligate, bad man. The riches he seemed to possess, astonished Andrea; but only for a short time; for the seeming mystery was soon explained. Luigi Passarini was, in fact, one of those celebrated robber chiefs, who, some years prior to the revolution of Cola Rienzi, infested, with daring and singular audacity, the Campagna of Rome, and levied, with impunity, a regular tax from the various towns and villages in the vicinity of the eternal city, Rienzi certainly

deserved the applause of Italy by extirpating those bandits and their formidable miniature armies.

Andrea joined his brother ; but being a coward at heart, he only acted the part of spy ; assumed his brother's name, Luigi, and appeared in society as the Count Luigi Pascarini. In this way, he served the robbers effectually.

After the lapse of two years, his brother and several of the band were carried off by a pestilential fever. Andrea was offered the command ; but, as so hazardous a life by no means suited his taste, he received his share of booty, and quitted that part of Italy. Some time afterwards, he arrived in Florence ; still under his brother's name, and assuming the title his father bore, he succeeded in winning the hand of the only daughter of Count Donati, a Florentine nobleman of considerable influence, but little wealth. Count Luigi, as we shall now

call him, persuaded the Count Donati that as nothing had ever been proved against his father, it was quite possible, through his influence, and the political state of affairs between Florence and Venice, to get his father's estates restored to him. The Count interested himself in a powerful quarter, and after a lapse of some time, Count Luigi was acknowledged to be the heir of his father; and a certain portion of his sire's confiscated property was restored. Count Luigi then married Donati's daughter; and, at the death of the Merchant Dalmasso, returned with his wife and son to Venice.

Before this, he had been joined by the villain Mussato, who had previously escaped from the galleys. This man was not to be deceived by the change of Andrea into Luigi; and Passarini, who was aware that the wretch knew too much, but, at the same time, could be useful to him in his schemes of vengeance,

took him into his service under the name of Mocenego. This scoundrel; who had the art of completely disguising his person, felt no fear of returning to Venice.

Years rolled on. By intrigues, wealth, and influence, Passarini became a member of the Council of Forty, and, in process of time, succeeded in becoming one of the ten rulers of the republic. During this lapse of years, his vengeance, though it slumbered, was unappeased. His victim was beyond his reach. To have the Merchant Alviano assassinated, would, the Count Passarini thought, be a poor revenge. He sighed for a deeper and more lasting vengeance. At length, after twenty years of absence, Alviano returned to Venice, the possessor of immense wealth, and the father of an only and dearly-cherished daughter.

"Now then," whispered the proud ruler of the Venetians, "my hour is come."

"And mine," said Mussato, to whom he spoke, raising the red wig he wore, from his brow, and showing the brand of St. Mark, upon his forehead.

It required but little ingenuity in one possessing such immense power as that of Passarini, to bring about the ruin of his victim.

At the period of Alviano's return to Venice, Passarini was a widower, with an only son. His object was, not only to deprive Alviano of his wealth, but also to tear from him his child to rob him of his good name—get him banished Venice, and then leave him to the merciless hatred of Guido Mussato.

We have seen how Mussato, thoroughly disguised, was placed as a secretary in the mansion of the Signor Alviano. The rest was easy: first, it was discovered that Alviano still corresponded with the Greeks (while strictly prohibited by the senate), also with a mer-

chant in Genoa. This correspondence was carried on solely in the earnest desire of discovering the fate of Paoli. Then it was ascertained that the merchant had lodged the greater portion of his wealth in the great bank of St. George in Pisa, preparatory to quitting the Venetian territory for ever—Mussato, an adept in counterfeiting hand-writing, forged various letters and documents. When all was ready, Alviano was secretly denounced; and, in the dead of night, Passarini had the merchant and his daughter seized, and lodged in the dungeons of St. Mark.

After a most absurd, mock trial before Passarini, and two of his firm friends, Alviano was found guilty and banished. Whatever property he possessed in the state was confiscated. But should his daughter accept the hand of a Venetian noble or citizen, the property would, as an act of elemency, be restored to her husband.

This was part of Passarini's projects ; for he thought it quite possible to make the daughter accept the hand of his own son ; and thus, while satisfying his vengeance, he should gratify his grasping avarice.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DOOM OF THE SPY.

So far, the iniquitous designs of Count Passarini prospered. Through his machinations Bartolomeo Alviano, in his old age, was stripped of his wealth, and banished with the stigma of traitor attached to his name. But the last act of the tragedy was yet to be performed, before the Count could say—he was sufficiently revenged. He had yet to deprive Alviano of his only child; to wed her to his only son; and then, by his power and treach-

ery, claim the confiscated property of his victim, as well as the immense sums Alviano possessed in the banks of Florence and Pisa ; for well he knew the fate in store for the banished man, consigned to the mercy of his villanous associate Guido Mussato.

After sentence had been passed upon Alviano, Passarini, easily obtained the controul over the persons of himself and daughter. The unfortunate merchant remained a prisoner in the damp cells of the prison, while the distracted child, torn from her parent's arms, was closely confined in a remote chamber of the Passarini Palace. In vain, the Marchese Tiepolo, before he quitted Venice, exerted himself to discover whether his unfortunate relatives had really fled, or still lingered in the dungeons of St Mark. But Passarini's power and artifices baffled every effort. Aware of the sentence passed upon her father, Agnes did not feel its full bitterness till torn from his arms,

and conveyed to the chamber assigned to her.

In vain the distracted maiden implored permission to follow her beloved and heart-broken father into exile. No other answer was given to her tears and prayers, than that if she consented to marry a citizen of Venice, the property of her father would be restored to her, and probably, she might then be allowed to correspond with her parent in his place of exile.

"Never, never," exclaimed Agnes wringing her hands passionately, "shall hand of mine be joined to that of a citizen of this unjust and cruel government."

Alviano, when too late, discovered that in Luigi Passarini, he beheld the assassin Andrea; and, in Tomaso Mocenego, the branded Guido Mussato, the galley-slave.

"Why not, father," exclaimed Agnes, when first he informed her of his dis-

covery, , "why not expose these villains to those who will judge you? Surely there must be some justice, even in Venice."

"Justice, my child!" bitterly exclaimed the prisoner; "there can be no justice when your enemy is one of the mysterious rulers of Venice. My trial will be only a mockery; my accuser, my judge, and examiner, will be Andrea Passarini. My voice will be silenced, and my words and actions misrepresented. No, no; better let the villain suppose I know him only as Luigi Passarini."

About a week after the sentence of banishment was pronounced against Alviano, Count Luigi Passarini entered the chamber where Agnes was kept a close prisoner. The unfortunate maiden shuddered when she beheld her father's bitter and unrelenting persecutor enter the room, and close the door. But, summoning the native dignity of her character, she appeared, as the Venetian bent his keen

glance upon her pale, but still lovely features—prepared to dare the worst his malice could project.

“Lady,” said the Count, speaking in a low, but marked tone, “I have left you a week to decide upon the choice which the clemency of your father’s judges have left to you. I now wish to learn whether you will accept the hand of a citizen of Venice, or follow him into exile. By uniting yourself to a Venetian, your father’s property will be restored.”

“Signor,” interrupted the maiden, joyfully, “there is no need of further delay. My mind has been made up from the first; and with my whole heart, I thank those whose decree has permitted me to accompany my beloved father into banishment. As to his wealth, they are most heartily welcome to it. I covet none of it.”

“So I surmised, Signora,” coldly returned the Count, with a sinister smile. “But cir-

circumstances have occurred since that choice was left you, which materially alter the case. That you despise wealth, I can very readily imagine. Had you accepted a noble Venetian for a husband, I would have remained silent. Now I can no longer do so. Since your father's sentence of banishment was pronounced, facts have come to light that place his life in peril."

"My father's life in danger!" exclaimed the maiden, starting to her feet, her face pale as death, but her eyes sparkling with indignation and terror. "What can you mean? Surely you would not revoke your sentence, and take an old, and, as you well know, an innocent man's life. No, Count Passarini, I understand you well," bitterly continued the maiden, as her gaze met the malicious glance of the councillor. "This is a mere threat of yours; but you shall not triumph. I know you, Andrea Passarini, cold-blooded poisoner as you are,

and sooner than wed one connected by blood with you, the destroyer of my father, I would joyfully perish at the stake."

Passarini turned deadly pale, as the excited maiden spoke, and returned his astounded gaze with an unshrinking look.

"Ha! you say you know me!" burst from his lips as he advanced, and, with rage and hatred flashing from his eyes, seized her fiercely by the arm. "But you are mistaken, proud, foolish girl. You have yet to know me, and to tremble at my hatred and my vengeance.

So saying, in a cruel and cowardly rage, he threw from him the fair girl, who fell prostrate upon the floor. Casting on her a malicious look, he continued—

"You have gained a knowledge you will dearly rue. Mark me, girl. You shall mate with the lowest ruffian in Venice, the scum of this city, the slave of a vile outcast. Your father—"

"Oh, God! my beloved father!" ejaculated Agnes; "I am mad—I have been mad! Oh! spare my father!" And the wretched girl strove to rise. But he spurned her, and left the chamber, livid with rage and hatred.

Turning the key in the door, the Count strode along the corridor till he reached his own private chamber. He then summoned Mussato to his presence; but before his vile associate entered the room, the Count had to a certain degree, mastered his passion.

"It is time," said the Councillor of San Marco, as he paced the chamber, "to bring this long-postponed business to an end."

"Signor, I am ready," returned the ruffian. "No child ever longed for a gilded bauble more than I languish, till my dagger drinks the blood of him who has left the brand of San Marco upon my brow."

"To all appearance, the sentence passed upon Alviano must be strictly carried out," said the

Count. "The girl is obstinate, and has sealed her own doom."

The leaden eye of Mussato, for a second, was lit up with a singular expression.

"A litter and escort," resumed Passarini, "will be provided to convey father and daughter to the great boundary-stone, on the margin of the Paduan marsh. The gondola of St. Mark will convey them across the lagune. Now, mark how you are to proceed. Six selected men will attend you, and you must follow the escort at a moderate distance. As soon as the father and daughter are left alone, in that desolate spot, ride up and take the girl under your charge. You need no instructions with regard to the father. I leave him," he added, with the look of a fiend, "to your tender care. He knows me already. Perhaps you will enlighten him as regards your own identity. Carry the girl to my Castle at Poliverra, and consign her to the custody of Jacopo Vernie; he will know what to do, as my messenger will

reach him before you. And now, Guido Mussato, it were as well, as our purpose is brought to a close, that you return no more to Venice. You are amply provided for, and you know our compact. The world is a wide one ; and with all your skill and art in disguise, you might yet be discovered in Venice. You will breathe freer beyond the atmosphere of the lagunes."

"You shall be obeyed to the letter, my lord," replied Mussato, humbly. And, with a servile bow, he quitted the chamber. As he closed the door, he muttered to himself—"The Count is right. Being no longer useful, I become dangerous ; and I begin to think it is perilous to have a Member of the Council of Ten for a master."

Mussato was no sooner gone than the Count drew a sheet of paper from his *escritoire*, and wrote two lines upon it, signed it, and directed it to his chatelain, Jacopo Vernie. As he did so,

he muttered, half aloud, and with a mocking laugh—

“This will effectually provide for my worthy friend Mussato. ’Twere dangerous for his safety to permit him any longer to remain at large.”

An hour after, a courier left Venice for the Count’s castle at Poliverra; and early the following morning a gondola, impelled by six oars, shot out from the Piazza San Marco, coming forth from the deep arch which was well known to lead to the dungeons beneath the Ducal Palace. The men pulled rapidly into the lagune, and took the leading canal in the direction of the mouth of the Brenta. It was a dull, dreary morning; a thick, grey vapor lay motionless, for want of wind, upon the sluggish waters, shrouding all the grandeur and beauty of that strange sea-built city, and wrapping every object in its chill embrace.

After some few mistakes, owing to the fog,

the gondola's keel grated on the soft sand of the beach.

About fifty paces from the strand, on a slight elevation, stood a large building, with open sheds encircling it on three sides. From those sheds, as soon as the boat touched the beach, there issued a horse-litter, attended by eight or ten armed troopers, with the badge of the Venetian Republic, on their bannerols. From the gondola, then stepped out on the beach, a Signor enveloped in a mantle, followed by a young female, who tenderly supported the somewhat feeble steps of the Signor, who appeared exhausted and weak, more by sufferings, than age, though he was advanced in life. The two strangers were then placed in the litter, the curtains drawn, and, surrounded by the men-at-arms, the *cortège* proceeded as rapidly as that mode of conveyance could accomplish.

The Signor within the litter was the mer-

chant Alviano, and the lady was his daughter, who, in her heart of hearts, exulted, as she threw back a glance, on entering the litter, at the slumbering waters of the lagune, hoping and praying she might never again be borne upon its treacherous surface.

After about two hours' travelling, the escort and the litter halted where three roads met, in as dismal a spot as ever travellers' eye rested upon in the territories of Venice. The place was a vast swamp, or marsh, formed by the overflowings of the Brenta and other streams. The officer commanding the escort ordered a halt; and then the merchant and his daughter were desired to alight. This they did without a word.

The Venetian pointed to a vast mass of rough stone built in the form of a pyramid. On the flat side, prepared for the purpose, was rudely sculptured the arms of the Venetian Republic, and the date, 1156. Then followed the Doge's name, Vitale Michaeli, who, by the

way, was one of the many rulers of the state, who had been massacred.

"Here is the boundary," said the officer. "That road," he continued, "leads to Padua; and that," pointing to a dangerous-looking narrow path, "to Dolo, a village a league distant, and where, no doubt, you will find shelter."

Without another word, he remounted, and, giving the signal to his men, they rode briskly away, and were immediately lost in the mist.

The daughter threw-herself into her father's arms, and burst into a flood of tears—not tears forced from her by despair, but by joy, intense joy, that her beloved parent was locked in her arms, free, unshackled, and breathing no longer the foul air of a dungeon with the prospect of torture or death.

"My beloved child," exclaimed the father, as he pressed her to his heart, "how grateful ought I to feel towards the Divine Power that

has not only spared my life, but restored me my child."

"Ah," exclaimed Agnes, "we are now together! Let us forget the past. But come, father, let us move on from this dreary swamp. We shall arrive, perhaps, at some friendly cottage, where we can rest for the night."

As the fair girl spoke, the tramp of horses' feet was heard, sounding dull and heavy on the turf-like soil.

"Some travellers," said the Signor Alviano, as Agnes caught her father's arm in an agitated manner, and strove to gaze through the fog in the direction of the sound. Then ensued the jingle of arms; and the next moment six horsemen, with a masked rider leading, came rapidly into view.

With a cry of terror, Agnes grasped her sire's arm, as the man in the mask alighted from his horse; and throwing the visor from him, revealed to the horror-stricken father and

daughter the features of him they had known as Mocenego the spy.

"So, Signor Alviano, you supposed you had escaped the toils so skilfully spread to ensnare you. With Andrea Passarini you have done. But," he added, as he strode close up to the paralyzed father and child, "you have not yet settled with me."

"Villain! treacherous spy of an accursed power that God will yet root from the face of the earth! what have I to say to thee? Have you not forged, and lied, and perjured yourself a thousand times over? have you not for gold sold yourself body and soul? Villain! what more do you want with me?"

And the old man drew his emaciated form upright. With one arm encircling his child, he repelled with the other the approach of the wretch, who gazed upon him with eyes sparkling with the rancorous hatred of his wicked heart.

Uttering a laugh of fierce mockery, the villain repeated—

“What want I with you? oh, foolish old man! and so, you knew me not, and thought I bartered body and soul for gold. No, dreamer, know me better.”

And dashing his low beaver to the ground, he raised from his forehead the false hair he wore, and rubbed his hands violently across his face. He then fixed his gaze upon the merchant.

“Mussato! Guido Mussato, the poisoner and assassin!” slowly burst from the pale lips of Alviano; while Agnes, with flashing eyes and erect form, stepped between her sire and his deadly enemy.

“Man,” ejaculated she, “you dare not touch my father. Stand back! we are no longer—”

“Away, girl,” interrupted Mussato, catching Agnes by the arm, and rudely pushing her towards two of the men whom he motioned to

draw near. "You will be provided for. My vengeance has now to be satisfied."

And drawing forth a stiletto, he advanced upon Alviano.

With a wild shriek that rang through the still air, Agnes burst from the hold of the men, and threw herself upon the villain, holding his arm as he was about to strike her parent, with a force that, for the moment, baffled him.

At that critical instant, the notes of a bugle came loudly and clearly upon the air, and soon the tramp of horses was audible. Mussato struggled and shook the maiden from him; but, as he did so, he slipped, and again Agnes seized his arm; while the attendants, startled and alarmed, unsheathed their swords, and sought to remount their horses. The next instant, brusting through the fog—some twenty mailed riders, spurred into the space. Their leader, at a glance, saw how opportune was his arrival; for Mussato had dashed Agnes to the

ground and held the struggling Alviano in his grasp, having his dagger raised to strike, when a blow from the butt of a lance smote the villain to the earth, and released the overpowered merchant from his grasp.

"Ha, by St Mark !" exclaimed the leader of the horsemen, "I am in the nick of time. *Corpo di Bacco !* this dense fog had nearly ruined all."

Springing from his horse, he raised Agnes in his arms. Alviano sank on his knees beside his child, kissing her cold forehead, while tears fell fast down his emaciated cheek.

Agnes shuddered. She opened her eyes, and they rested upon those of the stranger. With a cry of joy, she overcame her weakness, and seized the hand that supported her, saying, "oh father, beloved father, we are saved ! Look ! Do you not recognize our deliverer ?"

The old man looked up ; and then he beheld

the well-remembered features of Count Michaeello Steno, looking down upon his daughter with deep emotion.

While this recognition took place, the armed riders had coolly surrounded and disarmed the six attendants of Mussato, who, as he recovered his recollection, found himself held by two of the armed men.

"Dear lady," said Steno, tenderly supporting Agnes, "I was but just in time. Five minutes later, and I should never have forgiven myself. But in truth, Alviano," he continued pressing the old man's hand, "this dense fog misled us. But now, no matter. Nay," he added smiling, explanations, will come time enough. Here is a litter." And he led his liberated friends towards a horse-litter which had, just that moment arrived. "Let me see you both in, and then I will settle my account with that most accursed villain—"

Agnes cast an imploring look at the Count,

saying, "Leave him, Count, to the judgment of God. His punishment will surely follow."

"True, dear Agnes," calmly, though firmly, returned the Count. But before that, this reptile may do further mischief. His time is come!"

Father and daughter looked at each other. The old man, regardless of all he had suffered from the villany of Mussato, strove to induce the Count to leave the wretch to the punishment of his own conscience.

"My dear friend," said Steno, drawing the curtains of the litter, "that miscreant must no longer burden the earth. He would never rest; for the devil has full possession of his heart; and were I to spare him, he would track us like a hound, and never cease till he had satiated his vengeance on you or yours. Me he has deeply injured."

Closing the curtain, he motioned to the conductors to move on. As the litter became lost

in the mist, Count Steno advanced to where his armed men held the prisoners. Mussato, stood with livid and ghastly face and eyes glazed and sunken. Terrible was the agony of his guilty soul, now that the hour of retribution had arrived. He knew the character of Count Steno too well to doubt, for a moment, the doom that was before him.

Close by the side of the road, stood a decayed elm stretching its withered branches over the dark, discolored water beneath. Steno's eye rested upon this tree as he advanced; then facing the miserable Mussato, he fixed his stern glance upon him.

"Most infernal villain," said the Count, "if ever a prayer passed your lips, say one now. I give you three minutes; after which you die—die like a dog, suspended from yon branch. The dark flood beneath, will hold under its waters your vile carcase."

"My lord," exclaimed one of Mussato's attendants bolder than the rest, "that Sig-

nor," pointing to Mussato, "is the Count Passarini's confidential secretary. And if—"

"Ha, rascal!" returned the Count, "keep your tongue quiet. Thank your stars that I want not to meddle with your worthless lives. Cowardly reptiles you are, and richly deserve the whip to your backs, to stand by as you did, and see an innocent girl insulted, and an old man nearly slain by this miserable wretch. Up with him! Let his polluted soul become the prize of the arch fiend that pants for it."

The next instant, Mussato swung from the branch of the elm, two of the men having passed their long horse-ropes over the branch.

One agonizing cry, escaped the lips of the sinner. In a few minutes more, the rope was cut, and the body fell with a heavy splash into the water beneath, which the next instant, closed over it. A wide circle marked the spot, and then the troubled surface grew calm.

A smart breeze now arose, and then the fog began to move sluggishly from the face of the land; and as Count Steno ordered the men to be released, and threw himself on his horse, the sun broke through the misty vapour, casting its misty rays over the swamp, and giving life and cheerfulness to the before dreary scene; for, beyond the marsh, the green woods of Dolo and Antoli, and the green pasture-lands bordering the Paduan territory on one side, were distinctly visible.

CHAPTER XVII.

EXPLANATION.

WE have, as briefly as possible, laid before our readers the causes and the means through which the ruin of the Alviano family was effected. Perhaps it may be thought that too great a liberty has been taken with the Government of Venice at that period; and that the confiscation of property, and condemnation to banishment of a man perfectly innocent of crime, must be improbable. But so to conclude would be wrong. The reader of Vene-

tian history will find in almost every chapter, cases similar, as far as innocence is concerned ; but far more terrible in judgment and punishment. We mention three or four, probably well known to some readers, such as the deep tragedy of the two Foscari ; the fearful persecution of the Carrara ; the torture and death that followed the conspiracy of Cueva, when numbers, perfectly innocent, perished, being hung on the red columns, or drowned in the lagunes. Of a tribunal, whose chief elements were secrecy and terror, little that is positively authentic is known. The penalties which this tribunal inflicted were left entirely to themselves, and often extended to death, either by secret or public execution. Their dungeons were under leaden roofs, or beneath the level of the canals. “ As a clever writer of Venetian history says :—

“ Never did the principle of ill establish so free a traffic for the interchange of crime, so unrestricted a mart in which mankind might

barter their iniquity. The statutes of the Venetian Inquisition of State, now exposed to the general eye, exceed every other product of human wickedness, in premeditated, deliberate, systematic, unmixed, undissembled flagitiousness."

Steno had long been aware that he was looked upon with suspicion, and that the family of the late Doge and that of his widow, were secretly determined on his ruin. The Count found it would be a vain struggle on his part; for some time back he had carried on a correspondence with his relative, the Lord of Padua, who, though seemingly in intimate alliance with Venice, secretly favoured the views of Louis of Hungary. In one of Carrara's letters to Steno, he strongly advised him quietly to leave Venice, for he had certain information that his (Count Steno's) destruction was planned.

Steno deliberated but a very short time. He was not a man of much property in Venice;

but he inherited from his mother's uncle a very handsome estate near to the Lake of Garda, and the very large fortune he received with his wife was secretly invested in other states. This was the grand point to which Count Steno was to owe his downfall. But, encouraged by the earnest entreaties of his wife, who trembled at the crisis she perceived was rapidly approaching, Count Steno suddenly withdrew from Venice, and, giving out that he had retired into the Roman States, quietly took possession of the noble castle he possessed near Garda.

The Marchese Tiepolo, as we have seen, disgusted by the treachery exercised against his relative, Alviano, and also aware that even he was looked upon with distrust, quitted Venice, and, for some short time, remained in Padua; but finally purchased a fine property within a very short distance of his son-in-law.

The tender-hearted Paulina never ceased to mourn over the loss of her beloved Agnes, and

implored Count Steno, who possessed secret means of knowing how affairs went on in Venice, to exert himself, and, if possible, discover whether Alviano and his daughter still lingered in the dungeons of St. Mark; if not, to trace whither they had gone.

With all his early faults, Steno had a truly generous heart. He faithfully promised Paulina not to rest till some intelligence of Alviano or his child should be obtained. Amongst the officials and jailers of San Marco were two men, who owed, not only their lives, but their situations under the Government, to the Count. We do not, thank God, always meet with ingratitude for favours conferred; and these individuals were grateful, even when it was no longer in the power of Count Steno to befriend them. To these men he now applied, and through no less an agent than Caffagiola, the Venetian Bravo.

At length, through the above instrumentality, Steno gained an insight into Passarini's

plans with respect to the Signor Alviano; and, finally, he received a letter, stating the hour when Alviano and his daughter were to depart from Venice, also the exact spot on which they were to be left.

The delight of Paulina knew no bounds.

"We shall meet again," exclaimed the delighted girl, tendering the Count a thousand thanks for his successful exertions.

Still, Steno would, in the end, have arrived at the place much too late, but for a letter, containing a few lines, and signed "Caffagiola." The lines were as follows:—

"The fate of Alviano and his child is sealed, unless you are on the spot, *previous* to their arrival at the boundary. They are confided by Passarini to the care of that villain Guido Mussato, known as Mocenego. Alviano dies by his dagger, and his child's ruin is planned.

"Fail not on your life."

"CAFFAGIOLA."

The kind-hearted Venetian conducted the now happy father and daughter to his mansion on the Lake of Garda, where in peace and happiness, and in the society of her dearly-loved Paulina, Agnes Alviano, was as happy as a heart still beating fondly in memory of her lost lover, would lether. She nevertheless did not abandon the hope that some tidings of him would yet come to light; and, in that expectation, Alivano also still corresponded with a merchant in Genoa, once settled in Byzantium before the war broke out with Venice; for the father of Agnes could not divest his mind of the idea that Paoli was entrapped into the power of his bitter enemies, the Genoese. He also wrote letters to his bankers in Florence and Pisa, with full instructions, in case the lost Paoli should make his appearance there. Last of all, he sought out a trusty messenger, who was sent with letters to his brother the Marchese Damari. In these letters he gave a brief outline of his misfortunes, and expressed an ardent desire to return to his native land and

dwell there in peace and tranquillity with his beloved child. He blessed that merciful Providence which had preserved his only child, when, apparently, no earthly power could.

All these things being done, the Signor Alviano waited, in tranquil happiness, the return of his messenger.

We will now, in our next chapter, return to Giacinto Paoli.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BRAVO.

OUR hero, after the tragical termination of his adventure with the Count Passarini, returned to the locanda, and made preparations for quitting Venice the following evening. Juliano was to hire a fishing-boat to take them to Chiozzi, and to sail after sun-set.

In thinking over the conversation he had had with Passarini, he was fully inclined to credit what the Count said with respect to the banishment of Alviano, who, of course, was

accompanied by his daughter. If such was the case, intelligence would, no doubt, be had of his residence from his bankers in Pisa. Though Paoli had recently passed through that city, he had made no inquiries; for he fully expected to find the merchant and his daughter in Venice.

The death of Passarini troubled the Corsican but little. There was no question but that he had, all his life, been a bad and vicious man; and, in the last hour of his existence, he had attempted assassination. Had the Corsican been aware of all the crimes he had committed, he would have rejoiced that the world was rid of so superlative a villain.

It was late on the following day, when our hero awoke. In fact, he was roused only by the hasty entrance of Pulini into his room and saw, by his countenance, that something unusual disturbed him.

"What's in the wind now, my worthy squire?" demanded Giacinto, as he quickly

dressed himself. "I did not fall asleep till dawn, and I see it must now be near mid-day!"

"I wish to Heaven, Signor, we had attempted to find our way last night through the channel to Chiozzi."

"Why, what's the matter? One would think San Marco had been swallowed by an earthquake."

"Would to St. Nicholas, it was, Signor, with every one of its inmates masked and unmasked. Though, for the matter of that every face in this infernal city wears a mask, whether covered with black crape, or not. A precious umult there is in the place! Groups of Venetians are talking eagerly on every spot, where a group can stand in this water-built city. Officials and soldiers are searching every house. All the gondoliers and fishermen are stopped and examined. The fact is, that the gondoliers of, you know who"—and even Pulini looked round as if he expected to see an officer

of St. Mark standing at his elbow—"have got back early this morning, and related their story; and the whole of the magistrates, from the Council of Ten, down to a mere sbirri, are struck into a heap with amazement and no little terror."

"Well," very coolly replied the Corsican, "that is only what I expected. Of course, as soon as it was daylight, they hailed the first boat passing; and what else but amazement must be felt at the disappearance of a ruler of Venice, and in such a mysterious way, for, of course, they have not found his body? We shall leave Venice to-night, and there will end your troubles."

"By the mass, Signor, you take it very easy. You may depend on it that the officers of St. Mark will search every locanda in the city. All foreigners are to be examined. Should they take us—though no suspicion can be attached to us in reference to the disappearance of this cursed Count—yet, as men returned

from banishment, they would think nothing of hanging us from those infernal old columns. The Count's son," continued Pulini, "is frantic, they say. I heard several Venetians conversing below with our host. They report, every gondolier and fisherman is to be examined as to where he passed the night; and he will be forced to give proofs that he speaks truth."

"Where is Julian?" demanded Paoli, anxiously.

"Gone to bed till night, Signor. If we escape till dark, he will have a boat at a certain spot, and will come here for us. As to our host, he is in an agony for ——"

At that moment, the door slowly opened and the round, bald head, and pale face of the Signor Servite shewed itself. He then entered and closed the door.

"Signor, Signor, this is a frightful business! The officers are searching every house for strangers and foreigners. They will discover you, Signor; and though innocent of this

horrible murder, you will be known as an exile returned without leave. The saints preserve us! What's to be done? They'd think nothing of — Lord preserve us! of hanging your worship."

"Well, that would not be pleasant certainly, my worthy host," returned the Corsican very coolly, though somewhat puzzled to know what to do. "Have you no hiding-place in this old mansion till night-fall? Julianio is going to hire a boat to take us away this night; for I find I cannot do anything further in the business that caused me to incur the risk of coming here."

"Yes, Signor, I have a hiding-place," returned the landlord; "but it is a marvellously small closet, built into a thick wall. You certainly, Signor, cannot stand up on it."

"*Corpo di Mondì!*" exclaimed Pulini, eagerly, "never mind that: better to kneel in safety, than hang by the neck with plenty of

room to kick your heels. Shew us the place."

"It's in this very room, Signor," responded the host, rubbing his hands; "and you could'nt find it, if you tried."

"So much the better, *amico*, so much the better," returned the squire.

With Pulini's assistance, the host drew back the heavy couch; and, moving aside the faded tapestry that hung round the room, shewed the Knight and his squire a plain and apparently solid wall of oak panels in squares. Pressing his heel on what appeared to be the head of a bolt, he pressed inwards with his hand, one of the large squares; and Paoli observed a narrow space cut out of the solid wall, high enough for a man of middle size; but considerably too low for the Corsican. It would hold four or five persons, but had a very uninviting appearance. Paoli looked within, and perceived that air was admitted from the top through a grating.

"Signor," said the host, with a sigh, "I had that very place constructed to hide my poor brother in; and during two years, at different periods, he successfully escaped all the efforts of the sbirri of St. Mark, to capture him. He had a wooden-leg, Signor. Hark!" exclaimed the landlord, "I hear some one calling me. Put all your things in there in readiness. Let the bed stand against the wall. This room is in a long corridor with four doors. I will lock them all, for fear there might be an officer below now. When you hear me unlocking the door, if I do so twice, as if the bolt had slipped, get in there. All you have to do is to press back the panel and it catches in the spring."

"Signor Servite," exclaimed voices in the corridor, "you are wanted."

Away went the host.

"By the mass, Signor," remarked Pulini, he never told us how to get out."

"Oh, as to that, remarked Paoli, laughing"

"if there is no other way, a blow will smash the panel. But let us put away our mails and our swords; though, in truth, I do not admire being caught like a rat in a hole."

However, through the management of their host, Paoli and his squire remained throughout the day undisturbed. The shades of night began to spread over the city.

The Signor Servite was amply rewarded by the Corsican for his services and kindness. The night was not exactly the kind of one to select for concealment; for it was bright and clear. No moon threw her silvery light over the canals and palaces of Venice, but millions of sparkling stars shed a clear, mild light upon all around, save where the dark shadows of the stately palaces hid every object on which they fell.

Juliano arrived at the appointed time. His manner was hurried and agitated.

"Signor," said he, "lose not a moment. Something new has occurred. A fresh set of

officers are, at this moment, making more strict investigations in all the locandas. I greatly fear the possibility of passing out of the Grand Canal without being questioned. You must submit to be covered over with nets and fishing-gear."

"Lead on, Juliano," responded our hero. "we must trust to Dame Fortune and our own wits."

After bidding adieu to the Signor Servite, who, in honesty of heart, wished them every success in escaping, the worthy landlord devoutly crossed himself, and muttered an "ave!" whether for his own escape, or that of his guest's, must remain a secret.

As they passed out they heard the voices of Juliano and another man in angry conversation.

Paoli had nearly reached the destined spot, appointed by the Gondolier, when an officer of St. Marco, followed by six inferiors, ascended from a flight of steps, having just landed from a gondola. It was utterly impossible to turn

back, for they met face and face. Pulini, whispered—

“We are lost if we do not turn back.”

“To do so, would betray us,” returned Paoli. “If they accost us, say nothing. Let me speak. They can only know that we are foreigners.”

The next moment, the chief officer stepped up to our hero, and, in a polite tone, said—

“You will excuse me, Signor, if, in doing my duty, I delay you a short time. I must request you to answer one or two questions.”

“Well, sir,” returned the Knight, very calmly, but politely, “I shall be happy to answer any questions I think fit to reply to. But I will thank you to be quick, as I have an appointment of consequence.”

The officer, as he ran his eyes over the person of the Knight, critically and keenly said, “You are a foreigner, Signor, I perceive. May I request your name and place of abode?”

Giacinto Paoli felt his cheek glow as he replied—

“You must excuse my giving my name; but my place of abode is the Dalmatian Arms. I could, if I pleased, give you any name; but, for certain reasons, I wish to keep my own secret; and scorn to give you a false one.”

“Very well, Signor,” replied the officer, “I will not now compel you to give your name; but you must return with me to your locanda, as my directions are to place all foreigners under strict surveillance for twenty-four hours.”

As the officer turned to speak with one of his men; Pulini whispered—

“If you return, you are lost. Swim the canal and make your way to the Piazzetta San Marco. I will go for Julianio, They will be so intent on you, that I shall not be minded.”

“Will you be pleased to follow me?” said



the officer, turning round, after motioning to to his men to follow with the gondola."

Giacinto made no reply ; but moved on, rapidly revolving in his own mind the advice of Pulini, and quickly concluding that its adoption offered his only chance of escape.

There was no bridge across the narrow canal for near a quarter of a mile, and before the boat could pull up, he would be across.

Unbuckling his sword, and casting off his mantle, he looked, as well as the faint light would admit, along the opposite causeway of the canal. Not a human being appeared. There was a flight of steps nearly opposite.

Having made those observations, he suddenly, to the amazement of his escort, dropped his cloak, took his sword between his teeth, leaped in, and, in a few moments, while the surprised officers shouted for the gondola to row up, gained the steps. Having landed, he shook off some of the superfluous water that

dripped from him, and then, without knowing whither he was going, hurried along the causeway at a rapid pace.

Unfortunately the night-watch, consisting of three men, were attracted by the shouts of the officers; and, seeing our hero hurrying along, hastened to oppose his passage. The experiment proved a dangerous one to the foremost guard; for a blow from the strong arm of the Knight, who felt unwilling to use his sword, struck the man down. Then, catching the second in his grasp, he hurled him over the brink into the canal. The third adopted the wisest course, and beat a retreat.

Turning into a narrow dismal looking street, the fugitive's path was suddenly barred by a tall muffled figure, who, as Paoli drew his sword, exclaimed—

“Signor, follow me, or your life is not worth a ducat. This causeway ends in a high, impassable wall. I mean you well, Signor Paoli. Hesitate and you are lost.”

"Lead on; then," ejaculated the Knight.

"My case admits of no choice."

"You may safely trust me, Signor; follow!"

And the stranger dived beneath a low dark archway.

Though the Corsican followed the stranger's quick steps without any apparent reflection, such was not the case. In moments of extreme danger, a resolute and determined mind reflects rapidly. Paoli's situation was a very critical one. To hesitate, was to fall into the hands of the officers of St. Mark; whereas, in following the stranger, who so singularly recognised him, he calculated, if he proved false, he would have but one to contend against.

Such being the decision of the Knight, he dived beneath the archway after the stranger, who pushed open a door at the end of the avenue.

Paoli now observed that they were proceeding along one of the narrow and broken

causeways which, in the inferior quarters of the city, ran along the sides of the narrow and dirty canals, intersecting that region. The locanda he had left, was situated in a retired, and most unfashionable quarter of the city; and he perceived they were plunging amid the narrow, dirty, causeways of that part of Venice inhabited by the lowest order. Crossing several narrow bridges, and passing only two or three individuals, his guide suddenly emerged from a dark entry into an open space. One or two stately, but dilapidated edifices, shewed that this quarter, though apparently but thinly inhabited, and only by the poorer class, had once been tenanted by wealthy people. Into the entry of one of those edifices, his guide now entered, desiring Paoli, in a low voice, to follow, and adding, that their place of safety was before them.

Wondering who his tall conductor could be, and how he became so well acquainted with his name, our hero did as he was bidden. A

key was applied to a massive portal, and, the door being thrown open, the fugitives entered the dark passage within. The door was then closed and locked. Instinctively, Paoli laid his hand upon his sword; but a moment's reflection, drove all thoughts of treachery from his mind; and the unknown said, in a deep, but not unpleasant, voice—

“You are now as safe, Signor Paoli, as if you stood upon your native soil.”

“It may be so, stranger, and I thank you for your services, which I trust to be able to reward; but, *per Bacco*, I should feel more at home with a foot upon the land of Corsica. Can we have light?”

“In a moment, Signor, and even a change of attire, for, of course, you are wet from heel to head.”

His guide then struck several distinct knocks against a door, when a low and gentle voice, like that of a child, said—

"Is that you, Padre?"

Are you asleep, my child, that you do not know my signal? Open."

Several well-oiled bolts were drawn back, and then Paoli's guide pushed in the heavy door, and a faint light came from within. They entered; and the Knight cast a curious and anxious gaze around. They were in a large and well-furnished chamber, containing a bed in one corner. Sundry garments hung along one wall, and weapons of various kinds ornamented another. A fire was smouldering on a once splendid marble hearth; but what most attracted the Corsican, was a half-dressed boy about eight or nine years of age. The child turned his fine, dark eyes anxiously and inquiringly upon Paoli, who looked upon his mild countenance with singular interest.

"Throw on some wood, Guido, my boy," said the stranger. "Put the lamp down and get thee to bed."

Then, taking off his heavy mantle, and laying aside his slouched beaver, he turned round and faced the Corsican.

To Paoli, he was an absolute stranger ; apparently a man between forty-five and fifty, with prominent and remarkable features. He was rather handsome than otherwise ; but an air of rooted sorrow seemed to be the perpetual expression that sat upon his features.

"You had better take off your wet garments, Signor Paoli," said the stranger, taking down a suit of plain attire, such as were generally worn by thriving citizens. "You, perhaps are curious to know whom you are to trust. But I greatly fear my name will not inspire confidence. Nevertheless, you need not entertain any distrust. In Venice, I am known as Caffagiola, the Bravo."

Paoli looked fixedly and calmly in the face of this dreaded individual ; but betrayed neither surprise nor disgust.

"Within the last few moments, I suspected

as much," returned our hero; and now you have told me your name, which I conjecture is only an assumed one, I feel even more confidence in my safety."

"And yet," returned the bravo, with a melancholy, but pleased, smile, "I have at different times received some heavy purses as bribes to take your life."

"By the mass, you surprise me," returned Paoli, very quietly changing his garment. "I knew not I possessed so valuable a life; but, Caffagiola, if so I must style you, I am in extreme anxiety concerning my squire, and a gondolier known to you—one Giuliano Verbano. Can anything be done for them?"

"Juliano is my nephew, Signor. Of him, there is no fear. To the safety of your squire, I will look by-and-by. But, depend on it, Giuliano has taken him to his secure place of refuge. Those garments, Signor, I see were never intended for a man of your stature;

but this fire will dry your own in a very short time."

Seeing Paoli's attention caught by eight or ten poniards of antique and singular make, the Bravo said, "you look doubtfully at those weapons, Signor Paoli. But, believe me, they have never been stained by the blood of a fellow-creature while in my possession. Signor," he added in a deep and affecting tone, "I have, in truth, been more sinned against than sinning. In one word, I will partly solve the riddle; but alas! there is even more abhorrence in owning the designation I am about to mention, than in the name of Caffagiola the Bravo. I am, Signor, SPY OF THE COUNCIL OF TEN!"

